THE HIGH ROAD TO CHRIST

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A POPULAR ESSAY IN RE-STATEMENT

BY

RICHARD ROBERTS

Author of "The Renascence of Faith"



CASSELL AND COMPANY, LTD
London, New York, Toronto and Melbourne
1912

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FEB 18 1966

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PREFACE

THIS little volume consists of a series of Sunday evening addresses given to my congregation at Crouch Hill. The repeated requests on the part of those who heard them that they should be published and so made available for further consideration seem to indicate that they might be of service to a wider public in the way of stimulating thought concerning the content of the Christian faith.

The aim of these addresses is expressed in the brief introductory statement I made at the time they were delivered :

" What I am about to try to do is to show you the broad, essential outlines of the Faith of the Gospel as I hold it to-day, and to give some of the reasons why I hold it in the way I do. This does not mean that I consider that I have arrived at a final view,

or that I shall not hereafter change my mind upon these matters. There can be no honest thinking except on a basis of freedom; and no man is free who is tied down irrevocably to any scheme of belief, whether he has imposed it upon himself or has suffered it to be imposed upon him by a church or any other authority. It is frequently said that preachers of the Gospel are not frank; that if they do not actually preach one thing while believing another, at least they do not preach all that they believe. This is a very unfair criticism, for the simple reason that so long as a man keeps on thinking there will be many points upon which his judgment will be in suspense, and therefore upon which he has no right to pronounce. This procedure is far sounder than that he should proclaim his doubts and end his sermons with a note of interrogation. I shall try not to want in frankness, and will tell you what my working faith is, and—what is more difficult—endeavour to tell you why

I hold it. This is the more difficult task, because some of the foundations of faith belong to a region of experience which does not readily lend itself to plain and simple exposition.

"Further, it is necessary to make a distinction between belief and opinion. I may have a thousand opinions but no belief at all. For an opinion is a static thing which makes no difference to my conduct; but the moment it begins to make a real difference to me, then it becomes a belief. A belief is distinguished from an opinion by possessing and being a force. Very few of our opinions matter at all, but our beliefs matter everything. And in that continent of opinions which most of us hold the important matter is that bright, comparatively small, burning core of belief which governs our life. It will be obvious, therefore, that I am not proposing to draw out anything in the nature of a creed or a confession. All I want to do is to try to straighten out our

ideas upon the very few vital things concerning which it is a matter of life and death to us that our beliefs should be right."

It is hardly necessary to add that this attempt at a popular re-statement of Christian truth is avowedly tentative and provisional. The faith of the future is to be wrought out by many minds in a fellowship of prayer; and private ventures of this kind are from the nature of the case subject to all the limitations of the individuals who make them. These addresses were in the first instance evoked by questions raised in conversation by intelligent young Christian men and women, of whose personal religion there could be no doubt, but who were perplexed by the many difficulties incidental to the movement of thought and the increase of knowledge in our generation. I have reason to believe that in many cases these addresses served the end they were intended for—otherwise I should not venture to publish them.

It should, perhaps, be added that the addresses appear here just as they were spoken. The book is called by the title of one of its chapters, partly because that chapter seemed to be central to the whole scheme, and partly because the title expressed the practical intention in which the addresses originated.

RICHARD ROBERTS.

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THE
HIGH ROAD TO CHRIST

I

RIGHT OF WAY FOR FAITH

1. THE most significant happening of our time has been the discovery of *man as a whole*. There have been many great and startling discoveries in the last two or three generations; but not one of them is comparable to this, either in the nature or the range of its consequences. It entails many things, and one of these things is the right to believe. It establishes the right to believe on the same kind of sure foundation as the right to think or the right to laugh. It implies that faith is a native, original, inalienable function of human nature.

Few of us have altogether escaped sectional

and partial views of human life; still fewer have seen clearly and held steadily that the chief concern of a living man is *to live*. Some of us have thought that the end of life was to "get on"; whereas if "*getting on*," in the sense in which we commonly use the phrase, has a place on the programme of genuine living at all, it is simply as a means to more and fuller life. It is in no sense an end. Others of us have been inclined to suppose that a man should live in order to acquire and to accumulate knowledge, and to seek out truth, whereas if we are here to gain knowledge and to ascertain truth, it is simply that they may add to the sum of life. Perfect life consists in living out our whole life in every part of it at the same time; and it takes a complete man to live a complete life. Few of us have ever lived such a life. Comparatively few of us have had any idea of such a life; and some of us have deliberately refused to live such a life, because we were obsessed by the delusion that the

part was greater than the whole. That was the fundamental fallacy of Rationalism.

2. In the region into which our present inquiry is leading us, it is important that we should remember the principle that the area of our knowledge cannot be less extensive than the area of our life. We gain knowledge by experience, and by experience one means all that comes to us consciously in the process of living. Experience has to do not merely with the things we see and hear, but also with all the things that happen to us, all the things we do, all the things we feel, all the things we think. We live in contact with what is around us, and every bit and detail of that contact adds something to our experience. We draw in experience at every pore. And experience is the raw material of organised knowledge. Clearly, the only things we can ever know are those which come to us directly or indirectly through our actual dealings with the world. We act upon the world, and the

world reacts upon us ; and it is by the things it does to us that we know what it is. We can never know more concerning it than what is contained in the sum of those things it does to us—not, of course, to each one of us individually, but to all of us, for no two men have entirely identical experiences. We must pool our experiences and compare notes if we are to get at the whole truth. Wherever the universe (and by the universe we mean the sum of all things around us, seen and unseen) touches me (or I touch it—it comes to the same thing), there it deposits in me some fragment of that raw material, out of which, if I have skill and wit enough, I shall presently hammer out a more or less coherent and systematic body of knowledge. It will not be a complete body, for my knowledge, owing to my limitations, can only be partial, and I must needs supplement my knowledge out of the knowledge of others. But—allowing for my personal limitations—the whole of *me* is concerned in the business of getting at the

whole of the truth. Not, let me insist again, the whole of me alone, but the whole of you, and the whole of all of us. But I am responsible only for my own share; and in acquiring that the whole of *me* has to be engaged. Suppose, for instance, I sternly and steadily repress my capacity for love; you will judge rightly that there will therefore be a whole range of things concerning which I shall know nothing. Suppose a man puts his eyes out—he, too, is going to miss a good deal. The man who shuts down any single power which he possesses is denying himself a number of fruitful contacts with his universe, and is thereby putting a limit upon his knowledge. Now, it is just that very thing that we have been tending to do this many a day. We have been obsessed by a theory which required that we should shut down not one avenue, but all the avenues except two along which information concerning this scheme of things could reach us. We have been told, and

nearly all of us have been in some degree persuaded, that there are only two reliable ways of finding truth—namely, by using our senses and our intellects.

How this came to pass is a very interesting story, which cannot be told here except in the barest outline. It arose out of the great achievements of physical science. These achievements were the fruit of the use of certain methods, and they were of such a character as seemingly to justify the inference that these methods were valid for the pursuit and the ascertainment of truth everywhere else, and that no other methods could be valid at all. These methods entailed the use of the intellect and the senses only; and so we were told that those things that the intellect and the senses could not get at are not to be accepted as credible and true. Proof, either by sense-perception or by logical demonstration, or by both, must be forthcoming before any fact or idea could be impressed with the hall-mark of scientific

truth. It is not to be denied that the attainments of science appeared to justify this claim. The observation and accumulation of facts, which was the particular business of the senses, classification and deduction, which was the particular business of the intellect, led to the enunciation of certain broad general principles which were called "laws;" and there seemed to be no reason to suppose that if the process were only carried on far enough, we should not in time discover all the laws of the universe and lay out openly the whole mystery of things.

3. Now all this seemed to be fatal to one large—indeed, the very largest—department of human interest, namely *religion*. With a few occasional protests, the body of mankind had always taken for granted the existence of a world which lay beyond the reach of the senses; but if this new view could be sustained, it became clearly impossible to know anything about this suprasensible world. It cannot be observed, and

therefore it cannot be known. Similarly as you cannot see or feel or touch God, you cannot know certainly anything about Him. You can only guess; and guessing is not profitable. If there be a God, if there be such an unseen universe, seeing we cannot establish sensible contact with either, it is best to accept the limitations of our knowledge, and frankly to plead ignorance. That was the temper called Agnosticism; and it is a perfectly sound and honest temper. It was not the vulgar pretentious temper of atheism and other aggressive fashions of unbelief. It was essentially a temper of humility. It said—We do not know, we do not think we can know. We do not deny; we simply settle down to the acceptance of our ignorance. It was, in its best expressions, in no sense a dogmatic and self-confident frame of mind. It did not deny the spiritual universe; it simply denied our power to know it.

But another temper emerged which

boldly asserted the supremacy and the adequacy of reason, and repudiated the validity of any other means of ascertaining truth. Everything must pass the gauntlet of reason; and this temper openly took the field to campaign against everything that could not square itself with its demands. This temper was Rationalism. It is the positive and aggressive corollary of Agnosticism. Agnosticism was a negative thing, and we cannot thrive on negations. So Agnosticism was translated into positive Rationalism; and Rationalism drew up in line to give battle to faith. We have seen, or are seeing, the expiring struggles of this temper in the rationalist propaganda of the last few years.

4. Now a good deal has happened since the days when we fell down abjectly before the little god of the scientific method. Of course, so far as Rationalism is concerned—that is the thorough-going Rationalism which would have routed faith off the field with contempt

—it only required to be acted upon in order to break down beneath the weight of its own initial fallacies. We are creatures living in time, for ever passing from the known to the unknown, taking the most enormous risks every day, and taking them without turning a hair, engaged upon an enterprise in which every step is a step into the dark. We live every day and every hour of the day by faith, and it is absurd to suppose that faith which justifies itself in the planning of our daily lives is going to play us false or turn out a broken reed when we exercise it in a wider field. Rationalism breaks down in the very act of planning a rationalist meeting for to-morrow—for that is an act of faith. We may presume that the settled order of the universe will provide for the rising of to-morrow's sun and for our rising a little later—we may presume all this reasonably; but to act on a presumption, however reasonable, is to exercise faith. And if you let in faith there, you cannot logically shut it out anywhere

else. All you can demand—and it is a just demand—is that there shall be a reasonable presumption behind your faith ; and if there be no such reasonable presumption, then your faith is not faith, but credulity and superstition.

There is more to be said for Agnosticism ; but the Agnostic position is breaking down, has, indeed, broken down, in the face of two tendencies ; and both these tendencies have arisen from the continuous application of those very modes of investigation out of which Agnosticism was born. First, the scientific mind has begun to distrust its own instruments. The more its knowledge has grown, the more precise its methods of observation have become, the more difficult the business of classification has become, and the more precarious the process of deduction. So far from being able to enunciate laws with a fine assurance, we discover to-day that there are huge tracts, and these the most important tracts, in which we can

only speak of tendencies. Second, it has transpired that intellectual processes are valid only in the region of dead matter, and that they are incapable of dealing with life. In the region of matter you can always assume that like causes will produce the same results —there the intellect is at home with its laws ; but you can never tell what the next exploit of living nature will be, and it outstrips the intellect at every turn. Life runs riot, and no scheme of classification has yet been discovered that can keep pace with it.

So far then from being valid over the whole field, the truth seems to be that purely intellectual processes are only sound in one part of the field—that part which is concerned with matter and mechanical movement. Its concern is with what we call the "exact" sciences, mathematics, astronomy, physics, and the like. When it touches biology, when it tries to apprehend life, it speedily gets left behind ; life outstrips and bursts through its most far-flung deductions.

And it is inevitable that it should. For the intellect was, as Bergson says, created by life in definite circumstances to act on definite things. How then, that thinker asks, can it embrace life of which it is only an emanation or a part? It is only a bit of consciousness which has been adapted for the purpose of enabling man to fit as perfectly as possible into his surroundings. No more than my hand can do all the business of my body can the intellect cover the whole of life. It is something produced by life to serve its ends, and not primarily to expound or to interpret it.

5. Keep in mind that it is our business here to live and not to know, at least only to know in so far as knowing helps life; and that intellect has been produced just in order to help life. It has no manner of claim to sit in judgment upon the whole of life. Life is not only intellect; and just as life has expressed itself in intellect, so it has also expressed itself in instinct; and instinct is

greater than intellect in so far as instinct can deal with life, and intellect cannot. Instinct represents the main push of the life-force in us; and it includes all the loves and hopes and longings and desires in which life works out in us. So far from being superior to these, it is doubtful whether intellect is as valid as they are. For, as Romanes says, in the whole realm of nature there is no such thing as an instinct pointing aimlessly. There is something that it points to. Intellect can only speculate; but the meaning of hunger is that there *is* food; the meaning of the longing for love is that there *is* love; and the meaning of faith is that there *is* a God and a spiritual universe which faith may apprehend. Intellect thinks it has a goal—" the goal of thought is *one* "—there is One behind the sum of things, in which the sum of things is gathered up. But it has never found the One; it has only guessed at it. This very One about which the intellect guesses, faith seeks and finds, and

finds it in God. The God whom the intellect ignorantly and from afar off worships and seeks is declared to us by faith.

The sum of all this is that in this region faith is a more trustworthy guide than intellect. Even in actual practice in common life we are guided not so much by intellect as by instinct. We do not argue ourselves into doing things. Conduct is chiefly dominated by love, by desire, by greed, by the non-rational things in our make-up. We may justify or condemn a particular course of conduct after it has happened as being reasonable or logical or the reverse. But we do not do things because they are logical, but because we want to do them, or because we feel we must. And more than this, it would be difficult, says Bergson, to cite a biological discovery, that is, a discovery in the realm of living nature, due to pure reasoning. If faith has its limitations, intellect has not fewer but more, and since faith is as authentic an element in our make-up as intellect, we have every right to

exercise it. Nay, as it is a part of our life, and an inherent and integral part of our life, we have not only the right but the duty to exercise it. It is a part of our total selves ; and we shall not live our total life until we exercise it. And it has come to this pass by now that if we are going to be abreast of the times, we shall have to exercise it. It is no longer to be regarded as the weakness of ignorant and ill-informed sentimentalists. The man who believes alone is up-to-date. The Agnostic is out-of-date, and the Rationalist has become a quaint and pathetic survival.

It is not, however, on this ground that I would urge the exercise of faith, but because a man cannot be a whole man without it. The man who refuses to believe limits his manhood, for our manhood can only grow to its full stature when by faith it is released from the cramping bonds of the material. It is by faith that he lays hold of God. Faith is, of course, more than belief, it is belief at work ;

and the way in which faith works out will depend upon the kind of beliefs which it contains. What a man believes about God, about Christ, about the Bible, about the future life, will have definite consequences for his life and his conduct. And now that we see that faith is not only a justifiable but a necessary and an inevitable thing, it is essential for our own sakes, and for the sake of the world round about us, that we should have the right kind of faith, the right kind of belief, and that we exercise it in a right way. It is sometimes said that it does not matter so much what a man believes as how he believes. But how he believes will depend absolutely in the end upon what he believes ; and we shall now have to inquire what in the light of our own time our central beliefs should be.

II

THE MODERN RETURN TO GOD

1. We have heard a great deal in the last two generations of the conflict between Religion and Science. This arose out of the fact that some of the traditional religious positions seemed to become untenable in the growing light of science. The theory of evolution seemed to destroy the old doctrine of creation ; and the conception of universal law appeared to leave no room for miracle or for prayer. Added to this was the circumstance (with which we have already dealt) that we had become persuaded that nothing was trustworthy save only that which could be demonstrated or verified by the evidence of the senses or by processes of reasoning. According to this view, as we saw, we could know nothing of God ; and even if we could, yet in the light of the idea of universal law,

God seemed to be so tied up by the laws that He had made that He could not enter into any free personal relations with men. In either case, religion seemed to be impossible. There was no denial of God, but simply the inference that even though there be a God, He was outside the sphere of practical personal relationships, and so accordingly we put Him on the shelf.

Now, the expression "the conflict of Science and Religion," appears to assume that the methods and findings of Science are necessarily in radical opposition to Religion. Yet, at the very worst, all that could be said was that Science had discredited certain religious views. So far from being opposed to religion, it may be said without dubiety that the proportion of positive unbelief is and always has been probably lower among scientific men of the highest class than among any other type of thinking men. A German scientist, Dennert,* says

* "Die Religion der Naturforscher."

that out of three hundred of the most distinguished naturalists thirty-eight do not speak of religious matters at all, and of the two hundred and sixty-two that do, fifteen are indifferent, five materialist, and two hundred and forty-two are theists—that is to say, eighty per cent. of this group of first rank scientists have no quarrel with religion. There are, moreover, many instances in which it would seem to be true that scientific knowledge, so far from being hostile, has been a profound and constant reinforcement to personal religion. There is an Italian saying to the effect that " a little knowledge separates from God ; much knowledge brings us back to God." It is a circumstance of no little consequence to our present inquiry that as our scientific knowledge grows we are hearing ever less of the conflict of science and religion.

In any case, we may gather with not a little assurance that the situation has been relieved by the concurrence of several circumstances.

2. To begin with, the evolution idea has not proved the effective and comprehensive clue to the mystery of existence that it promised to be; and ever since the theory was announced, it has been the unceasing bone of contention among the scientists themselves. Not that the idea has been challenged. No intelligent persons nowadays doubt the essential truth of the evolution principle; but an endless controversy has turned about one point, namely, whether the determining factors in evolution are outside or within the living organism. Is life the product of the operation of physical and chemical forces, and is its development determined by the operation of external circumstances? Or is life an independent thing, itself a force, which while not indifferent to external conditions, did not arise out of them and is to some extent able to overcome them? Let me point out that on either view there is one ultimate question to be answered—where the whole sum of things came from

to begin with; and you either have to be content to leave that unanswered or to jump to the tremendous proposition with which the Bible starts—"In the beginning God created . . . ." We are too deeply convinced of the necessary relation of cause and effect to imagine that anything exists, least of all this wonderful effect which we call the Universe, without a sufficient cause. But leaving that on one side, it is safe to say that the tendency of modern thought is to regard life as original, independent, and not to be explained by the operation of natural, or at least of physical and chemical forces, not to be so explained at all in its origin, and only partially in its development. When the British Association met in Dublin in 1908, Dr. Haldane, an eminent biologist, said: "In Physiology and in Biology generally, we are dealing with phenomena which so far as our present knowledge goes, not only differ in complexity but differ in kind from physical and chemical phenomena; and

the fundamental working hypothesis of physiology must differ correspondingly from those of physics and chemistry. . . . The physio-chemical theory of life has not worked in the past and never can work. As soon as we pass beyond the most superficial details of physiological activity it becomes unsatisfactory, and it breaks down completely when applied to fundamental physiological problems." * What this means is simply that life cannot be dealt with upon the same basis as matter; and while it would be untrue to say that it justifies a religious view of life, it is perfectly true to say that it entails the breakdown of materialism as an interpretation of life.

But this evidence is so far only negative. The tendency which I am now describing, *i.e.* towards the view of the primacy of life, is called *Vitalism,* and I want to quote what two leading living naturalists have said

* Quoted in Thomson and Geddes' excellent and illuminating little volume on "Evolution," p. 203.

on the point. Thomson and Geddes ("Evolution," p. 203) state: "We confess that the modern movement of vitalism has our increasing sympathy. It affects our evolutionism to this extent at least, that we feel compelled to recognise the persistence of some originative impetus *within* the organism, which expresses itself in mutation and variation, and in all kinds of creative effort and endeavour."

There are not a few thinkers involved in this movement, but the chief exponent of it is the great French philosopher, Henri Bergson. I do not propose to give you Bergson's position at large. But practically it amounts to this: "There is," he says, "an original creative impetus in life, which passes from generation to generation of germs, is sustained right along the lines of evolution among which it gets divided, and is the fundamental cause of variations, or at least of those variations which count." This life-force is essentially creative, is for ever ex-

pressing itself in new forms of life, breaking up at this point and that to develop along different lines: at this point breaking up into the two great streams of vegetable and animal life, breaking up at that point into instinct and intelligence, and so breaking up at a thousand points to produce the endless variety of the living forms of nature, and attaining the climax of its creative activity in man. This original independent urge of life, starting out as one impetus but containing in itself from the start all the impulses which have produced specialised forms of life from the protists up to man, and still operative in all but a few of the forms of life which have wandered into blind alleys of development—this is the great fundamental fact with which we have to do.

3. We are carried back then in thought to that original spark of life which was once deposited somehow in this world, charged with those innumerable potentialities which

have eventuated in the multiform and many-coloured panorama of life as we see it. But we cannot stop there. Life as we know it is continuous; life produces, and life only can produce, life; and what is more, life can only reproduce itself, so to speak, along its own lines. Thistles produce thistles and not figs. This spark of life must itself have originated in some previous *life*; and we must believe that all the potentialities which were latent in this primal spark were also in the life from which it came.

Remember, then, that one of the potentialities which were latent in this original seed of life is that which has eventuated in human consciousness. The promise of consciousness was in it from the start; the seeds of personality were in it from the beginning; the germs of instinct, of intuition, of intelligence were present in it from the first. And just as the acorn which becomes an oak was produced by an oak, so that primal urge of life which has produced

consciousness, intelligence, intuition, and the whole make-up of human personality could only have emanated from some life which itself also had the attributes of personality. Consider, further, that this creative impulse of life has also produced not consciousness only but conscience, the knowledge of good and evil, and the instinctive sense that we were made for the good. The seed of the moral sense, like everything else, was in that original deposit of life, and must have been put into it by a force which itself possessed moral attributes. We cannot resist the inference, it seems to me, that there is, beyond our sight, a creative conscious moral personal Life behind the sum of things that we know, which at some point touched this world with its finger, and other worlds for aught we know, deposited something of itself in them, a spark, a seed of life, charged with seemingly inexhaustible energy of creation, with all the possibilities of intelligence, moral sense, love and passion and all the other

ingredients of human personality; and what can that ultimate creative conscious life be but God, God expressing Himself, God at work?

Now this is not proof. It is a presumption, an inference. But I find I have to come to it if my mind is not to go reeling blindly into the uttermost darkness. There are only two alternatives: I must either think myself on to God, or stop thinking altogether. Life began sometime; and time belongs to the very essence of life. From what we know of the behaviour of life in time, we may be sure that it did not merely happen; that its beginning was not a mere fluke. We know that life is continuous; and if in thought I bring myself back to the first beginnings of life in this world—and life in this world is the only life we know anything about—I cannot then have come merely to the brink of a precipice which rises stark out of the void. It must link on to something there; and it must link on to something like itself—to

Life. And the only Life beyond life that we can think of is the Life of God. The conception of God becomes a necessity of thought when we begin to contemplate life.

On this view, this whole wonderful panorama of unfolding life which we contemplate becomes no other than the spectacle of God fulfilling and expressing Himself. We can only see a part, a little part of it, it is true. But modern science enables us to look upon the process of life with but a few gaps from its first minute beginnings up at last to man, to this free, responsible, creative, conscious being which is all of us; and a wonderful, bewildering spectacle it is. It is the continuous age-long triumph of life over matter; and evolution is nothing but that. Each step in development registers some new victory of life. And in it all God is fulfilling Himself. He did not retire from business, if I may put it so, when He had set the stars in the heavens and the warm glow of the primal spark of life was kindled

on the earth. He is no spectator of the game of life. He is Himself involved in it deeply, fully, from start to finish. We are done for good with the idea of the static, absolute, unchanging God. We call to the living God, the God of life, He who is ever becoming, who is involved in all the travail and the groaning and the agony of the Creation, who is involved in all our struggles for the ideal, who is baffled as we are by our failures, who rejoices as we do in our victories, for they are His failures and His victories, and "whose secret presence running through creation's veins" is slowly, surely, bringing it at last to some great unknown goal of which all we can say is that it will be worthy of Himself and in keeping with His glorious power. This is the God to whom we are returning to-day; and when I stop to think of Him, my soul tingles with gladness and exultation that I serve a God who stands not on some "heights too high for my inspiring," but

who has called me to the fellowship of travail and of triumph and ascending effort with Himself, a God who made me to be His comrade and His fellow-worker.

But it is necessary to remember that we must form our ultimate conception of what God is from the highest life we know; and for that we must turn to the Gospels. I am not at this point going to discuss the theological questions which are raised by the person and character of Jesus. It is only necessary for us now to remember that human personality reached its highest expression in Him, that human life touched its moral high-water mark in His; and it is His life, and not yours and mine, that we have to read back from if we would form a true conception of the character of God. We shall have to come back to this at a later point in our inquiry.

4. I said in the previous lecture that we could not speak of laws but merely of tendencies so far as living nature is concerned. You will now, perhaps, see the reason for

this. After all, a law is only a broad generalisation, and it never covers all the facts. There are exceptions to all laws. But with regard to living nature our generalisations have to be of the broadest character possible. We can simply say that life is continuous along its own line. As I have said, thistles grow thistles and not figs, but a given thistle-bush may unexpectedly one day produce a new kind of thistle. The cut-leaved variety of the greater celandine appeared suddenly in the garden of an apothecary at Heidelberg in 1590, and has been constant ever since,* which—with other recorded phenomena of the same kind—seems to indicate that there can be no hard and fast laws in this region. There is a seeming capriciousness, a certain quality of unexpectedness and surprise in the operations of Life: the power behind Life is apparently free. And more than this, many natural processes have been modified

* This statement is also borrowed from Thomson and Geddes' "Evolution."

by human intelligence, by laboratory experiment. I need not weary you with all the evidence for this: experiments with the pupæ of certain butterflies and with flounders have shown how natural processes can be artificially modified and in some measure determined. What I am concerned to show is that natural processes are not to be regarded as fixed, immutable sequences, and therefore that, beyond the very narrowest limits, to speak of laws in connection with life is a precarious thing.

Now, it was on the ground of the universality and the immutability of law that we began to lose faith in certain things. This was why we lost faith in prayer. Everything happens by law; and in a world of law there is no room for prayer. Prayer is irrelevant, a gratuitous illusion. It can get nothing done. But now we know that the area in which law prevails is well defined, and that outside that area—that is, through the whole field of life—there is a very wide

margin in which nothing is absolutely fixed and determined; and if that be so, prayer is at least possible. God has not abdicated in favour of His machinery; He is still on the throne, and over a wide area of His empire there is no statute law. He legislates as the need arises, as the occasion demands; and He is at least sufficiently free to be able to hear our prayer. The universe is not a piece of gigantic clock-work. There is clock-work in it; but there is also life; and in the realm of life there is freedom. But remember this: just as conscience, so also the prayer-instinct is one of the products of the urge of life; and it is the power by which we link ourselves up to God, who has called us into the comradeship of travail and labour with Himself. It is our means of relating ourselves to Him. Prayer belongs to the Divine order as really as the law of gravitation, and to pray is as natural a thing as to love.

5. But what I am concerned to show most

of all is this—that in the sphere of moral effort the whole future story of our race hangs on the co-operation of man with God; and this co-operation is not a fixed pedestrian business, as though it had been determined beforehand. The whole trend of my argument leads to the thought of the freedom of God. When a free God and a free man meet either in conflict or in co-operation, you never can tell what will happen next. That is why history is so diversified a thing. If we were subject to immutable law, and God had surrendered His freedom to His laws, events would follow one another in fixed monotonous procession. But that is not what we find. There is no steadiness in history, and it is only when we study it in very long stretches that we can see an ordered progress in it. What I want to insist upon is simply that a free God, who hears and is able to answer prayer, who is accessible to the spontaneous approaches and requests of free souls, makes

history in accordance with the conduct and carriage of men. God is conditioned by nothing in the world but by us. We may fight against Him and then He must crush us; but if we work with Him, the measure of our devotion will be the measure of the speed with which He will achieve His own goal, which is also ours. We may hasten or we may retard the coming of the Divine Order; we may by our consecration and our importunity bring God in power into the affairs of the world at any time. He is free; there is nothing to prevent Him; and the only thing which prevents the Divine Order breaking into the world is our supineness, our selfishness, our sloth. "*My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,*" said Jesus; and we were made men and women to share in that work.

III

THE BIBLE IN A NEW BINDING

1. You will recall that part of our argument in the preceding lecture by which we reached the conclusion that as the acorn which becomes an oak must itself have been born of an oak, so the seed of life which has borne the fruit of human personality must itself have issued from some anterior personal life.

This is virtually another way of saying that God made man in His own image. It means that, whatever the ingredients of human personality may be, they are all to be found in God from whom they issued forth. Our intelligence is of a piece with the intelligence of God. His heart and ours, His mind and ours, work upon the same lines. This seems to be borne out by the fact that we are able to trace out and define certain

laws, certain general principles, which govern the material universe. An Arabic author writes a book; I cannot read it unless I know the Arabic in which it is written; the mind of the reader must have something in common with the mind of the writer, if the book is to be read and understood. So we may say that the scientific mind which inferred and enunciated the Law of Gravitation must have certain elements in common with the Divine Mind which devised and originated it. And we may say—in a parenthesis, to reinforce the argument of the last lecture—that as it takes a mind to understand and read "Nature's infinite book of secrecy," it took a mind to invent and compose it. The mind which created the Universe and the mind which interprets it must be as much of a piece with one another as the minds of two friends who meet and understand each other's conversation, or who correspond and understand each other's letters.

But it is not in the matter of intellect alone that we may reasonably infer a correspondence between human personality and the divine. The similarity must extend over the whole range of personal qualities and activities. My conscience, for instance, corresponds to the moral nature of God; and that higher level of life which is accessible to man, which we call the *spiritual* life, is that in me which corresponds to the Spirit of God, that is to say, just as God by the Holy Spirit communicates Himself to man, so the spiritual life in man receives these communications and responds to them. Just as the transmitting and the receiving instruments of the wireless telegraph are tuned up to the same pitch, so the Spirit of God has its counterpart in the spirit of man; and by this means there is made possible personal communication between God and man. I can understand what God says to me; I do so, for instance, whenever my conscience is called into action; and God can understand

what I say to Him, and He does so understand me when I address Him in prayer.

These are the two elements in our intercourse with God, God revealing, man praying. What we call Revelation is the accumulated sum of all that man has understood of the self-communication of God through the ages. As the writer of Hebrews says, Revelation was given in divers manners and in divers parts; and God has never anywhere left Himself without witness. What we know of God is the sum total of what men have been able to take in of all that He has ever spoken.

2. It has to be remembered that Revelation must, if it is to be understood by mankind at large, be given through men. We are —all of us who have a genuine spiritual life —capable of receiving revelation, but none of us can receive directly the Revelation as a whole. There are some of us who can receive more, much more, than others, by reason of our greater spiritual sensitiveness. But for

the larger purpose of revelation God chose spiritual giants, men of great unique spiritual receptivity, to whom He told His secrets and by whom He purposed His secrets to be interpreted to the world. These were the prophets, in all lands and in all ages. A revelation in order to reach the mass of men must be melted down in the crucible of human experience and cast in the moulds of a human mind.

But from the nature of the case, revelation given in this way must be fragmentary and incomplete. It could never be more than a splendid patchwork. Parts of the mind and will of God could be gathered here and there, and much might be inferred concerning the nature of God from them. I might, for instance, know something of the mind and the general character of a man by studying his books or his pictures; but if I am to know the man as a whole, I must come into personal contact with him. I must know him, not in his books, but in

his personal life. The whole being of God could never be revealed by being spoken or read about; it could only be revealed by being seen in action, that is to say, by being seen in life. But if it is to be seen in a life, it must be a life which we can understand, a life which does not transcend our limitations, a life like our own. God must be revealed, if He is to be known for all that He is, in a human life.

3. But such a revelation could only come as the climax of a long process. It had to be prepared for in the gradual unfolding of the mind and will of God. This preparation went on in many lands; but the main line of the progress in revelation was directed through one comparatively small nation, which achieved the highest and purest understanding of the will and mind of God in the ancient world. The story of this stream of revelation is embodied for us in a great literature, great not in volume but in character, consisting of his-

tory, poetry, preaching, and the beginnings of a philosophy.

In accordance with the fitness of things, out of the womb of this little nation there appeared in due time a Man who so lived on earth among His fellows that they came to recognise that in Him God was revealing Himself to the world. He lived for about thirty years in the world, three only of which He gave to public life. Yet that brief episode has given rise to a body of literature, enormous in volume, and not yet complete, a literature of interpretation and exposition. But of this literature, there is a small luminous core consisting of biography, history and letters addressed to communities and individuals, which has been accepted for eighteen centuries as the sufficient ground of the proclamation and interpretation of this revelation to the world.

The first body of literature, the literature of preparation, is the Old Testament; the second, the literature of interpretation, is

called the New Testament. Both together constitute the Bible, the Christian Scriptures, by common consent the most wonderful volume in the world. It is the record of divine revelation from its early beginnings to its glorious culmination in Jesus Christ.

4. Now, it is a stupendous claim to be made on behalf of any book that it is a record of the self-revelation of God; and yet, despite the vastness of this claim and the issues of life and death which hang upon it, we have no means of substantiating it save by appealing to the Bible itself. Of course, there is an external test by which we must judge this claim ultimately, but we are not in a position to apply this test until we have first of all examined and studied the Bible. Obviously the first thing to do with a document for which a big claim is made is to examine it.

But this examination must be conducted in a certain way. The book must be allowed to speak for itself. It must not be made to

say what we may want it to say; and a great hindrance to the understanding of the Bible is that so many of us make up our minds beforehand what we are going to find in it. Paul says that the Jews failed to understand the Old Testament because they had a veil over their faces, the veil of an old tradition; and there is always a tendency to forget to approach the Bible with unveiled face and therefore to fail to find out just precisely what it means.

i. We must therefore approach it without a theoretical bias of any kind. To approach it, for instance, with the settled conviction that the miracles recorded in it did not happen, because a rationalistic view of things denies credibility to miracles, is straightaway to prejudice the issue. The credibility of miracles, like every other recorded event, is primarily a question of the genuineness and the weight of the evidence. To give another instance of this mode of approach, Schmiedel, a well-known scholar, says that only those

passages in the Gospels which reveal no trace of hero-worship can be regarded as absolutely trustworthy foundation pillars for the life of Jesus. But I can claim with quite equal right to say that only those passages which do reflect hero-worship constitute the true foundations of the life of Jesus. And who is to judge between us? To go with any preconceived idea of this kind to the Bible is to wear a veil over our faces and to miss the point of it.

ii. We may not go either to the Bible with a fixed and preconceived system of doctrine. To do that is to reduce the Bible into a volume of proof-texts and so to miss the great sweep of its movement. It will be time enough for us to fix up our doctrinal schemes when we are through with the plain straightforward study of it. To have your creed settled beforehand is to wear a veil which prevents a straight reading of the Bible.

iii. And we may not go to it either with a theory of how it came to be written and

put together, that is, we must avoid any antecedent theory of inspiration. We may gain and formulate a theory of inspiration *after* we have read it, and we probably shall; but we shall distort and misinterpret the Scriptures if we start out with a theory.

You will doubtless infer from this that I mean that the Bible should be treated like any other book; and with certain reservations, I do mean that. One thing I would venture to say, however, namely, that if you approach the Bible as you would approach any other serious book, you will not long continue to treat it as you would another book. There is a difference. But meantime this is the way to start. I know very well that this view does not accord with that of many whose judgment I respect. There are those who say we ought to start with an assumption of its authority, that we have no right to challenge its statements, that it possesses what is called plenary inspiration, or sometimes verbal inspiration, which means that

every word in it was directly inspired and dictated by the Spirit of God.

Notice first of all, with regard to this view, that whatever claim the Bible makes for itself, it never makes that claim. Where then does or did this view originate? Suppose a man from Mars were to come into this earth — a man whose mind worked in the same way as ours. We ask him if he has ever heard of the Bible; and we tell him it contains things absolutely necessary to his salvation. He asks us to show him a copy. Now, his first question would probably be, "Where did this book come from? By whom and when was it written?" And then, most important of all, "How do you know that it is true?" What answer would we give? I think our first impulse would be to reply, "Because God inspired it." The man from Mars would infallibly ask, "How do you know God inspired it?" "Oh," you would reply, "I was taught to believe that from my infancy."

But suppose the Martian were now to ask, "How do you know that the people who taught you taught you rightly?" How would you meet him? You could only say that they and their teachers and their teachers' teachers had taught it for a long time, and you would probably add something vaguely about the Protestant Reformation.

I am assuming, of course, that the man from Mars had come upon a believer in plenary or verbal inspiration; for there is in the end no logical alternative between that view and the view which admits the right and duty of free impartial study of the Bible. But it is as well that Protestants should remember that the theory of plenary inspiration received no countenance from the leaders of the Reformation.* Luther did not hold it. He says, "In fact the Gospel of John and his first Epistle, the Epistles of Paul,

* For the rest of this paragraph I am largely indebted to Principal G. Adam Smith's "Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament."

particularly those to the Romans, the Galatians, the Ephesians, and the first Epistle of Peter, these are the books that show thee Christ and teach thee all that is good and necessary for thee to know, though thou shouldst never hear or see any other books. As for the others, the Epistle of James is a veritable epistle of straw, for there is nothing evangelical in it." Most of us will differ profoundly from this judgment of Luther concerning James; but in any case it is clear that he is not responsible for the theory of plenary inspiration. We Presbyterian folk trace our lineage back to John Calvin. In his comment on Matt. xxvii. 9 he says, "In what way the name of Jeremiah has stolen in here I do not know, nor do I trouble myself about it. That the name of Jeremiah has been by error substituted for that of Zechariah the thing itself clearly shows." In Acts vii. 16 Stephen says that Jacob's and other patriarchs' bodies were carried to be buried in Shechem, in a sepulchre

which Abraham bought of the sons of Emmor, and Calvin remarks, "As everyone can see, an error has been made in the name of Abraham; wherefore the passage has to be corrected." There is no view of plenary inspiration with its logical sequel of inerrancy here; and we must not ascribe the view to Calvin. At least we may safely infer that verbal inspiration was not a Reformation principle. The supreme authority of the Scriptures in matters of faith and doctrine certainly was a Reformation principle; but the authority of the Scriptures did not depend upon a theory of plenary inspiration.

5. Having cleared the ground thus far, let us now examine the positive conditions of the proper approach to the Scriptures.

i. First of all, we must make a resolute endeavour to discover as precisely as possible what the Scriptures actually say. But here we are face to face with a difficulty. There is a chasm of some centuries between the earliest known manuscript of the Scriptures

and the latest writer of them. For instance, there is substantial agreement that St. John's Gospel is the latest New Testament writing, and that it was written about the end of the first century; but the oldest manuscripts we possess of the New Testament belong to the fourth century. In the case of the Old Testament the discrepancy is much greater, there being few manuscripts which are earlier than the eleventh century. When you come to consider that in this interval the sacred writings were copied and re-copied over and over again, that the copiers did not cling closely to the manuscript from which they copied, of course that they changed words and phrases frequently, with the very best intentions, so that the manuscripts we possess show a bewildering variety of different readings over the whole range of the Bible, it becomes a very perplexing task to trace out what precisely the sacred writers did write. This does not imply that the Scriptures as we possess them are not to be depended upon;

for though the examination of the texts does lead to important changes here and there, no difference is made to the substance of the Bible as a whole. But you need only compare a page of the Authorised Version with the corresponding page of the Revised Version to see that it is not a safe proceeding to lay stress upon the letter. What we want to learn is to read the Bible not by single texts but by contexts, and then we shall not miss its meaning. Of course the work of discovering the true original text of Scripture must be done by scholars who give their lives to it. A great amount of work is being done in this direction; and we have every right to expect that the work will bring us steadily nearer the original writings.

But this is not all. If we could get right back to the first sources, it would be enough. All other difficulties would settle themselves. But as we are not there yet we must bring to our aid other modes of study.

ii. We must study the language of Scripture.

The study of the language of a book is one of the best methods of determining the time in which it was written, and therefore of putting it in its proper setting. Suppose you were to read these two passages in the same book:

"Withouten doubte the ordynanynce that Christ hymselfe ordeyned, if hit were holden clene, hit were the beste of other; ffor thereby is ilke degre myght iche man be saved. Ffor then wolde charite growe more and envie be more destroyed . . ." *

"When first the idea became widely spread among men that the Word of God, instead of being truly the foundation of all existing institutions, was rather a stone which the builders had rejected, it was but natural that the consequent havoc among received opinions should be accompanied by the generation of many new and lively hopes for the future . . ." †

If, as I said, you should come upon these

* Wycliffe, "Septem Hereses" p. 53 (Dearmer).

† R. L. Stevenson, "Familiar Studies of Men and Books."

two passages in the one book, without any indication that the former passage (which is clearly older) was a quotation, and if both were ascribed to the same author, you would say there was a mistake somewhere. The spelling is different, the syntax is different, the style is different. They could not have been produced by one man or even in one age. I have given you an extreme instance, I have put Wycliffe by the side of Robert Louis Stevenson; but any student of literature could distinguish the difference if, instead of a passage from Wycliffe, I had read a passage from Macaulay or John Wesley. That kind of thing occasionally exists in the Bible, within single books of the Bible; though it is largely hidden from us because we read it in a translation. But the scholar detects it immediately, and he forthwith begins to separate the two elements, and, if he can, to fix their date and authorship, and to assign them to their own places in the order of revelation.

iii. But he does not merely depend upon an examination of the language. Had I read the Stevenson passage a little farther, we should have come upon a reference to the French Revolution. If we were reading the passage two thousand years hence, and had no clue to its authorship, we should infer from this reference that it was written not earlier than the nineteenth century. If a given writing refers to or reflects some particular set of historical circumstances, we can say approximately when it was written. Sometimes in one book like Isaiah or Zechariah you will find two parts which clearly reflect quite different historical conditions, and we can therefore assign them to different periods. Zechariah in the first part reflects the historical conditions of the sixth century B.C., while in the second part it reflects those of the fourth ; and Isaiah's first thirty-nine chapters are clearly pre-exilic, while the remainder plainly reproduce the circumstances of the exile itself.

All this question of dates is important because the meaning of a given statement depends largely on the time and the circumstances in which it was made. We know how words and phrases change their meanings. Take the word "conversation." When the Authorised Version was made, "conversation" meant the way in which men carried themselves, their behaviour. But it does not mean that to-day. It has come to mean not a man's walk, but a man's talk. The time and the circumstances in which a certain word was used affect its meaning and our understanding of it. It is of course impossible for the great majority of us to do this work for ourselves. We have to trust others to do it for us. It is peculiarly the work of devout scholars who make a life-work of it. And they are doing it; they are gradually enabling us to see the Bible in a new light, nay, in the very oldest light of all, its own light; helping us to fix its several parts in their own places in the order of history,

showing us the long development of thought, of feeling, of outlook, from the first awakening of the moral and religious sense, through the trials of the Jewish people to the splendid ideals of the prophets, up at last to the perfect revelation of God in Jesus Christ and the interpretation of it in the New Testament. It makes the Bible, instead of being an incoherent patchwork, a massive coherent whole, a record of a majestic unfolding of the heart of God. We see the morning star and the early twilight, the break of day and the rising sun moving in strength and splendour through the heavens. And when we see the Bible in this broad light, the minor errors and discrepancies which perplex the believer in verbal inspiration do not trouble us. We see that they are simply the inevitable accidents from which fallible human agency is never immune. For God chose men of the same flesh and blood as yours and mine, of the same frailty, to carry through this great enterprise. Great men, truly, capable

of great unique inspiration, yet never superhumanised by their inspiration, never made more than fallible men. Through such men has come the record of this marvellous progress of revelation which to-day, as the result of the scientific study of the Scripture documents, stands out more glorious, more overwhelming, more sure than before.

I think you will agree with me that there is nothing unreasonable in these simple straightforward methods of finding out what the Bible says. They are simply common sense. It may surprise some of you to be told that the study of the Bible by the last two methods mentioned is what is called the Higher Criticism.

6. But it is not enough that we should use all the available means to discover what the Bible actually says. We must go on to discover what it has to say to *us*. The really marvellous thing about the Bible is that in finding out what it says we discover that it is saying something directly to us; and that

gives us the clue. I read Stevenson's essays for diversion, for instruction; but whenever Stevenson or any other man says a true thing to my heart or my conscience I am willing to admit that there he has spoken the word of God to me, as plainly as a preacher from the pulpit. But the Bible speaks to conscience and heart and spirit all the time. And this is how I know it is true. When I let the Bible speak to me, it touches me at this point and that; it hits me here and there; it inspires me in time of despair, it comforts me in time of sorrow; it has a word for me in all the occasions of life. It fits me. It responds to the deepest needs of my nature. This is where its authority is discovered, in its essential truth to and correspondence with our experience of life. Go to the Bible in the spirit in which it was written, with the same honest intensity of purpose, with the same passion for truth, and it will straightway and alway speak to you the very word of God. And if it does speak to

me the word of God, nothing else matters very much. I see all the rest—questions of its origin, of how it came to be written—in the right perspective. But best of all, I see now more clearly than ever I did how every word of God leads at last to the Word Incarnate. The Bible, as I now see it, gathers round Christ, who is the crown and apex of it. I have learnt the meaning of what He said, "These are they which testify of Me." I see that the Scriptures are given to us supremely to give us a sound working knowledge of Jesus Christ. Look at it in this way. You have an important appointment in your gift, and a man applies for it. You will want to know something of him; of his antecedents, of his personal history, of the impression which he made on his immediate circle, of what he has done in similar positions to that which he now offers to fill, and of his outlook and programme. Well, Jesus Christ comes to us men seeking the highest position in our gift—the throne of our hearts; and

the Bible is the book of His credentials. We read the story of His antecedents in the Old Testament, His personal history in the Gospels; the Acts of the Apostles tells us how He affected the people and the generation nearest Him; the Epistles tell us how He fulfilled in others the position He seeks in us—for fundamentally the Epistles are records of Christian experience—and the splendid visions of the Apocalypse tell us something of His goal. The Bible, let me repeat, is the book of the credentials of Jesus Christ.

When I realise and grasp that, it does not disturb me that Genesis shows traces of composite authorship, that there was a pre-exilic Isaiah and an exilic Isaiah, or that the book of Acts may have been written by more than one hand, or that the Apocalypse may contain fragments of earlier Jewish books. These things are important at their proper level; but at the highest level of all Luther's criterion of criticism is right. What is important is that the Scriptures do testify of

Christ; and their authority lies in the fact that experience says that their witness is true. A Chinaman from a remote village comes to a big town to do some business; he carries back with him a thin little book he had bought for a trifle in the town. He comes back in a year with a wonderful story. The village wants to know more of this strange tale, of this Person; he himself has found a Saviour and a King. What was the little book? It was the Gospel of St. Matthew; and the little book had told its own story with these consequences. That is what the Bible does, that is what it sets out to do; that is its meaning; that is the way in which it is to be understood. "These are they which testify of Me." This is the principle which gives it unity, which binds it into one whole.

IV

THE HIGH ROAD TO CHRIST

1. It is plain that the claim of Jesus Christ to a place of sovereignty in our lives would be very seriously affected if we were to discover that the historical records of His life were unsound and unreliable. Should the Gospel narratives turn out on inquiry to be historically untrustworthy, we should have to re-examine the whole range both of our theological conceptions and our personal loyalties. As, therefore, our relation to Jesus Christ, in view of the nature and the extent of the claims which are made for Him, involves issues of life and death, it is a matter of the utmost importance that the historical grounds of these claims should be severely and vigorously scrutinised. We cannot afford to stake our life upon any Gospel, concerning the historical foundation of which

serious question is raised, without first of all satisfying ourselves that the foundations are as reasonably sound as anything in the nature of historical foundations can possibly be. But this is a point which fortunately need not detain us. I cannot enter now into a demonstration of the statement; but you will need to take it from me that the result of modern historical criticism of the Gospels is to put their substantial authenticity as narratives of events beyond any serious doubt, and if there still remains a doubt about this point or that in the records, it is not of such a character as to necessitate any serious modification of the impression which the history as a whole makes upon us. In particular, the history recorded in St. Luke's Gospel and in the book of Acts may be regarded as a reliable account of the events with which it deals; and though there are still some outstanding questions regarding the growth of the evangelic tradition and the mutual relations of the Gospel records,

there is no question left outstanding that need trouble us concerning the historicity and the general reliability of the Gospel narrative.

2. In recent years the interest in the study of the Gospels has gathered mostly around the mode of approach to the interpretation of them, and in particular to the problem of recovering the authentic outlines of the personality of Jesus. The life of Jesus has been written during the last century times almost innumerable — mostly by German students. The spirit of the study has been very well defined in the title of the English translation of a recent German work to which I shall have to refer presently—namely, "The Quest of the Historical Jesus." Some of us have been in the habit of regarding German Biblical scholars as men who were deliberately setting themselves to destroy the validity of the Scripture records, academic vandals whose chief delight was to pull down and break up the faith of simple people.

But it is time that we should frankly recognise that these men, whatever their faults and limitations may have been, were out for the truth. They have not indeed discovered the truth; for after a long period of Gospel study under the influence of one theory some of them are now swinging round to another. We shall have discovered the truth when we have arrived at a point where nobody has anything more to say: and as just now the people of whom I am speaking are saying as much as they ever did, it is a pretty safe inference that their modes of approach, valuable as they may be up to a certain point, are not getting them nearer the final truth concerning Jesus.

Some of you will recall how a few years ago we heard of a movement in theology the watchword of which was "Back to Christ." The idea underlying this sentiment was that the ages that had been passed since the appearance of Jesus had built up an elaborate tradition around Him; He

was, as it were, hidden behind a dense mass of superstitious veneration and theological doctrine. In order, therefore, to get at the original significance of Jesus we must take a mighty leap over this traditional lumber and find out the real naked truth about Him from the primitive documents. We must no longer look at Him through the thick haze of ecclesiastical dogma. We must not even allow ourselves to look at Him through the eyes of the Apostles. We must look at Him as well as we can with our own eyes. We must study the documents which record His history in a deliberate, impartial, scientific way.

I think we can see that there is a certain plausibility in this view. It is possible that the figure of Jesus is distorted for us by theological and other accretions to His person ; and undoubtedly a good deal would be gained if we could restore a plain, simple straightforward picture of the Galilean peasant whose historical appearance has made so great a difference to the world.

But the trouble seems to have been that it has been found impossible to study the Gospels in an impartial scientific way. For a good deal of this tendency in the study of the Gospels has been animated by a frank scepticism. I am speaking now in general terms, and there are exceptions to be found to what I say all along the line. But in the main these students have, as I said, started from a frankly sceptical standpoint. The miracles, for instance, must be ruled out, because on rational grounds a belief in the genuineness of miracles is not to be entertained. The Resurrection must be regarded as a myth, and so forth. During the last hundred years or so there have been endless shades and variations of sceptical criticism, with correspondingly diverse results. Broadly, the net result of this inquiry was to give us a picture, with many blurred outlines, of a simple idyllic personality who lived a pure unselfish life and taught a high idealistic morality, who came into conflict with

Jewish tradition and its upholders, and who suffered at their hands the historic fate of such persons—that is, He was put to death.

Of recent years there has been some reaction from the sceptical mood; and in that volume, "The Quest of the Historical Jesus," which I have already mentioned, we have the characteristic product of this reaction. Schweitzer, with justice, insists that the Gospels should be allowed to tell their own story. But when we come to examine the story as Schweitzer reads it we are bewildered by the transformation. The simple inoffensive Jesus of the earlier critics has been replaced by a rather cloudy-minded visionary, with objects in view totally different from those of the Jesus of, say, Ernest Renan. The earlier critics had neglected certain passages in the Gospels in which Jesus had taught the sudden catastrophic coming of the kingdom. They had thought of Him preaching a kingdom which was to de-

velop slowly in the world. Not at all, says Schweitzer; the kingdom which Jesus preached was—well, it sometimes seems as though it were already here, and sometimes as though it were on the brink. The uppermost thing in the mind of Jesus was His Messianic consciousness with a strong eschatological emphasis. He was not the teacher of a sublime and rather impracticable morality, but the prophet of a new order which was imminent, and which was to break suddenly upon the world, and in which He should be head and lord.

There can be no doubt that the earlier critics under-estimated this aspect of the Gospels as much as it seems to me the newer critics over-emphasise it. Schweitzer finds evidence for his view in every corner of the Gospels; he discovers it, for instance, in the feeding of the five thousand, which appears to him to be a symbolical meal connected with the imminence of the kingdom. At the same time it must be said that he

has done us an enormous service in two ways: firstly, in showing the inadequacy and hastening the breakdown of the sceptical and rationalistic modes of approach to the Gospels; and secondly, in helping to recover and restore to a due place a neglected aspect of the teaching of Jesus without which we cannot fully understand Him. But meantime it is enough for our present purpose to note the virtual bankruptcy of the "Back to Christ" principle when it is applied in a thoroughgoing way to the study of the Gospels. In spite of its plausibility, it has clearly certain defects which prevent it from achieving satisfactory results. The lofty teacher of the older criticism, the herald of a new order of the newer criticism—neither of them fills the bill. Neither of them is the Christ we know. Mark, it has been all to the good to have both these aspects of Jesus emphasised; but when either is so exaggerated as to appear the supreme and distinctive fact in the personality of Jesus, it

does not take us long to see that the picture is somehow out of joint.

3. It seems to me that the fundamental fallacy of this process lies in its assumption that it is possible to jump over the intervening history, an assumption which a moment's reflection will show to be wholly untrue. Take any great historical episode you like—say the Protestant Reformation. You have not done all that is needful for the interpretation of the Reformation when you have discovered the precise course of events which took place in those wonderful years. That was only the beginning of things. From that period broad fruitful streams of influence have flown into many lands, and these streams are for ever breaking into new channels. The great principles of the Reformation are constantly receiving fresh applications; and you have to consider the tendencies of subsequent history in order to arrive at a clear understanding of the inwardness of the Reformation. The Refor-

mation is not yet at an end. Its impulse is still operative ; and so long as the movement which it set afoot continues to any extent vital, it is wholly absurd to suppose that by pegging out two dates, and saying what happened between them, what this man said and that man wrote, and so forth, you are in a position to explain the Protestant Reformation finally. It is so with the Gospel history. For the understanding of Jesus, the subsequent history of Christianity is as essential as the records of His personal life. The character of the influence which He set afoot is as necessary to a proper interpretation of Him as the content and quality of His teaching. Even the doctrines of the Church, which are simply successive attempts to place Jesus properly in a coherent scheme of thought, in a systematic view of the world, are necessary to a true understanding of Him, for they register with more or less accuracy the general tendency of Christian experience. The massive interpretations of

St. Paul must have due force in any study of Christ, and, indeed, the whole range of circumstances which have arisen from the impact of the Spirit of Christ upon individuals and communities. You cannot write off history in this summary way; and the history of the modern world has been so affected by the Spirit of Christ that we must regard it as an indispensable datum for any inquiry into His significance.

More than that, it is a sheer impossibility to jump the history, for the history is recorded more indelibly upon our souls than on any scroll. We, as we are to-day, are the products of all that history; and we can no more dismiss it from our calculations than we can switch off a segment of our consciousness. We may persuade ourselves that we have put Paul and the creeds behind us; but Paul and the creeds and all the other constituents of Christian history have become a part of us. Insensibly, we carry it all with us to our study of the Gospels. We cannot

transport ourselves into the first century. We cannot see Jesus as His contemporaries saw Him. He has made too enormous a difference to the world for us to be able to see Him as He was, in the wilderness of Judea or in the fertile fields of Galilee. Life and experience are continuous, and no device has yet been invented which enables us to put the clock back an hour, not to speak of nineteen centuries. You may tear up a few documents; but you cannot depart from what you are; you cannot erase the records which the Christian centuries have engraved upon your soul.

4. It is true that the newer school of critics professes that it does not ignore subsequent history. It points out that the Early Church reproduced the temper which it finds in Jesus, that "trembling on the verge of an apocalypse," that tense tremulous expectation of the end of the age which is, in its judgment, the distinctive characteristic of Jesus. This is true; there is no doubt that

the Early Church expected a swift Second Advent. But what the critics fail to point out is that, though this hope dwindled away into a very little thing within the apostolic age, the Church persisted and grew. If the Church came into existence on the basis of this expectation, it must have been dissolved when the expectation wore away. But it did not. It remained and increased. We are surely to find the secret of its existence, not in an expectation which passed away, but in a steady impulse which remained after the Advent hope had ceased to exercise men's minds. The successive shocks of the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and the Pentecost bewildered the Early Christians, and it took them some years to see things in a plain unclouded way. But at last they emerged from the atmosphere of imminent catastrophe into a steady-going way of life impelled by deeper forces than those which appeared on the surface of their life in the early days. It is in these deeper forces that we are to

discover the secret of the Church, and ultimately the original genuine significance of Jesus.

Now what were these forces? Obviously, they were forces which were operative in the personal experience of these Christians; and we may, I think, say that they were two in number.

The first was that they believed themselves to be redeemed souls, sharers in a Redemption which was mediated through the Cross.

The second was that they were convinced that the Lord whom they acknowledged was risen and living, that He was ascended to the right hand of God, and that He also dwelt in them to perfect their Salvation.

It is clear that the first Christian impression of Christ was not of a teacher or a prophet, but of a doer, of someone who had *done* something. He had taught much, but in the earliest records the teaching does not loom large. The whole attention was directed

to what Jesus had done and was still doing. He was supremely a Redeemer and a Saviour.

You will gather from this, therefore, that our mode of approach to the study of Christ must be by the way of the Cross. We must not begin at the other end and reach the Cross and find in it the natural doom of a prophet who had come into conflict with existing institutions. We must begin at the Cross, and interpret the life in the light of the Cross, in the light of that experience which has come to the world of men through the Cross.

4. That is the right way, the historical way, to get back to Christ. We must interpret Him in the light of the Redemption He wrought and of the multitudinous personal and social transformations which have followed it. Consequently, the demand with which our actual study of the Gospels must start is that they shall show Him to us as what outside the Gospels He has actually in history turned out to be, namely, a Saviour. There

is no view of Jesus Christ which will meet either the need of the case or the facts of history adequately except the manifestation of a Redeemer. And He must be a Redeemer throughout. His whole history must cohere with His death. The thirty-three years of His earthly life must work out virtually as one act, one tremendous impact of redemptive energy upon the world.

Now, a redemptive act on this scale implies an intervention from without. The history of mankind left to itself is a history of degeneracy; and it has over and over again been saved from degeneracy by the irruption of spiritual energy at various points in its history. In none of these cases is the arrest of the degeneracy satisfactorily explicable on natural grounds. Yet in all these cases we recognise certain limitations. They have, like the Protestant Reformation, been local in their results; or, like the Methodist Revival, they have only affected certain aspects of human life. Yet in all cases since

the appearance of Jesus they have derived their impulse from that appearance. All spiritual and moral revivals in the Christian ages have derived their inspiration from that great redemptive episode which is the life of Christ. The appearance of Christ is unique, distinctive. It is the fruitful source of great outbursts of redemptive power in the ages; it touches every side of life; and it is on the scale of the whole world. It cannot be explained as the spontaneous outcome of previous tendencies. It was a break in the order of history. It was not a continuation of any process hitherto in operation. It was the appearance of a new, positive, universal energy of redemption into the world.

The only adequate interpretation of it is that it was the act of God. It was the direct intervention of God in the affairs of men in the person and work of Jesus Christ. I say this is the only way of explaining the Gospel history in the light of its historical consequences; and the great question for us is

whether the Gospel history itself can bear the strain of so tremendous an interpretation.

5. What does all this imply? It implies first of all that, if God intervened in the affairs of men in the person of Jesus Christ, Jesus Himself must be proved worthy of the character assigned to Him. He must Himself be a perfect revelation of God within the dimensions of human nature. He must, that is, fill the place of God in the lives of men. Jesus must give us in His own person and life a true impression of God. Every man comes into the world with a sense of God, with, as it were, a blank canvas on which he is to paint for himself a picture of God. His vague craving must lose its vagueness in a definite conception of God. Does Jesus give us that definite conception? If we limn the figure of Jesus upon the blank canvas, does He fill it?

Well, I can only answer for myself; and when I read the Gospels and trace out unmistakably the absolute moral sovereignty

of Jesus Christ, I say to Him, " My Lord and My God." He fills the canvas. When I turn to the impression He made on those who saw Him face to face, I find that they said the same thing. He is just what I expect Him to be when, tracing out the historical consequences of His appearance, I judge that in Him God intervened in human affairs. He is just what I should expect God in human flesh to be; and more than that, I find in Him a revelation of God such as I need and such as satisfies me.

Now, it does not belong to my present purpose to attempt a doctrinal definition of the person of Christ. All I am concerned to show is that the greatness of the impact of the redemptive energy which has transformed the Western world and is still to-day at its work of transformation all over the world, and that with as great vitality as it ever possessed, demands the conception of a special intervention of God in the affairs of men at that point in history where the

redemptive process began; and that the impression that Jesus made and has made upon the generations of men from that day to this is one which accords with the conception that in Him God did intervene redemptively in the affairs of men. He is the effulgence of God's glory and the image of His person. He should embody the highest morality that we have it in our power to conceive—and, as a matter of historical fact, He does.

6. It follows from this that we cannot apply to Him any of the limitations and conditions which affect the rest of us. Bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, He certainly was. Yet because He was the vehicle of the divine energy of redemption we cannot possibly expect Him to fit into all the conditions which govern our humanity. What is a rule to me need obviously be no rule to Him. That I shall not rise from the grave after three days does not shut out the possibility of His having done so. Nay, more, it is

necessary to my conception of Him as the vehicle of this redemptive energy that He should rise from the dead. For Redemption in order to be effective must be continuous; and the Resurrection is that act which links up the redemptive process which has been at work throughout the subsequent ages with the life of Jesus. It is the link between the story of Jesus and the history of the ages. It was the act by which the energy of Redemption was liberated from limitations of time and place and became universal in its scope and endless in its duration. In that hour the Crucified Jesus became the living Lord and the continual Saviour.

And this is the Christ we must look for to-day; the Christ we are compelled to look for by the study of the Gospels and of the subsequent history. The moral sovereignty, the sinless perfection of Jesus, on the one hand, the vastness of the Redemption which He wrought and still continues to work on the other, leave us no alternative but to

believe that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." And this Christ is in the last resort the only one that these hearts of ours, with their burning hopes and their deep, restless longings, have any use for. We must have a Christ who can fill us. The attenuated, bloodless Jesus of modern criticism, and the tremulous visionary of the new school, leave us cold and hungry. The Christ whom our souls cry out for is He in whose face long ago men saw the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. And to that Christ we may still with confidence turn.

V

THE CROSS

1. In our description of the person of Jesus Christ stress was laid upon the fact that from the earliest time the continuous tradition of the Christian Church has regarded Him not so much as a teacher as a *doer*, as One who had *done* something; similarly, the whole literature of the New Testament, says Professor Cairns, is "inspired by the conviction, not simply that something new has been discovered, but that something new has happened." The early Church—and the whole Church ever since—has connected this new happening with the Cross. The essence and the heart of the Christian Gospel lies in what happened on the Cross; and the great word which is traditionally associated with the Cross is the word *Redemption*.

In saying this I am merely stating the

problem which is now before us. Here you have a certain historical episode; it is claimed for it that it was virtually and actually a turning-point in the world's history. It is the great historical watershed which parts the old world from the new. It has had vast and deep consequences in the subsequent centuries; but, unlike any other historical event, it has an immediacy of challenge and appeal to-day from which no man of normal moral constitution can turn away unheedingly. The Cross says something to you and me which, if we can hear at all, we must listen to; and which, if listened to, speedily reveals itself to involve issues of life and death.

Concerning this there can be no argument. It is a pure question of fact, whether or not the Cross presents issues of life and death to those who contemplate it understandingly. I have told you that I am only speaking my own mind; and this is the assumption with which I start and with which I think every

student must start in the endeavour to appreciate the inwardness of the Cross. I do not know that the early Christians heard and felt at the Cross what I do; but they did hear and feel something in their day which made a deep and far-reaching difference to them. And it is still from the moral reaction of the Cross, from the way in which it affects one's conscience that it is necessary to start the study of it.

What I find in the Cross is the greatest moral achievement of all history. It is the perfect man in the perfect human act. The perfect *human* act I say; for we must at once establish the antithesis between the human and the brutal. The characteristic act of the brute is self-assertion, the characteristic *human* act is self-sacrifice. The Cross is the self-sacrifice of "the highest, holiest manhood." It reveals man at his moral highest. It is the *C major* of ethical attainment.

2. Well, when I stand over against the Cross, I am disturbed. I am not able to

look at it in a cold, detached way. I have something in me which is stimulated into quite disconcerting liveliness the moment I begin to take it in. That is my conscience; and what my conscience says to me is—"There you have the true measure of moral manhood. There in that one act you discover the moral liability which belongs to you as a free, responsible soul. Have you ever come near it? Have you ever really *tried* to come near it?" Though I may attempt to hedge by saying that it happened long ago and things have changed and that I am, anyway, a poor kind of human thing, I know all the time that I am hedging; and I cannot escape the consequences. I am judged and convicted, not so much in respect of my failure in particular achievements, as of a wrong spirit, a wrong attitude, a wrong way of life. The Cross convicts me not of moral inadequacy but of moral perversity. The Cross should be the keynote, the aim, the ideal of the true human life; and I have

led my life not toward it but away from it. I have been dominated not by the spirit of self-sacrifice but by the spirit of self-assertion. The Cross meant self-negation: my way of life has been a persistent and impenitent self-affirmation. I find a great gulf fixed between my way of life and that which came to its climax in the Cross.

3. But there is more than this. When my conscience judges me in the light of the Cross, it is not a purely domestic affair transacted within my own soul. When a magistrate passes judgment, he is not expressing a private opinion. He is the mouthpiece of the commonwealth, and he is clad with authority to act and speak on behalf of the commonwealth. My conscience similarly speaks with authority. It is not a private judgment that a man passes upon himself. There is something ultimate and dreadful in the word of an outraged conscience. It is the echo within us of the final and absolute moral order which cannot

be resisted and from which there can be no appeal. Its judgments carry with them an authority which is not to be evaded or gainsaid. A man whose conscience convicts him knows that he has offended not merely against himself but against an absolute righteousness, the agent and spokesman of which within him is his conscience.

But just because my conscience discovers in the Cross the supreme expression of moral conduct, and assents to it as the standard by which I am to be judged, I must infer that the Cross represents the historical embodiment of that ultimate righteousness which speaks to me through my conscience. That final moral order from which there is no appeal is focused within the dimensions of a human life in the Cross. The Cross represents the ultimate righteousness as it works out on the plane of humanity.

When we talk of an ultimate righteousness, we are talking pure abstract nonsense unless we think of it as an attribute of God.

A moral order cannot exist apart from a personal being, and that supreme and absolute righteousness which is represented by my conscience must be a quality and an activity of God. From which I would infer, therefore, that the Cross is the act of God, God expressing Himself within human dimensions on the plane of history. That is the only adequate explanation of the unshared uniqueness of the Cross as a moral phenomenon. For neither before nor since has any man come within hail of that perfect self-negation and sacrifice, that perfect obedience in a sinless life, which the Cross represents. Some men have come nearer than others; many have been distinguished by signal moral achievement. But the Cross rears its head above them all, a towering peak which touches the heavens and dwarfs the greatest heights of human attainment. It stands alone.

4. Now, the difficulty has been in modern times to square this view of the Cross with evolution. We have—and up to a certain

point rightly—applied the principle of evolution on every side of life; and when it is applied to history it is supposed to demand a gradual unfolding of human possibility, an ascending scale of moral development. But in our view, the very summit of moral achievement was reached, to all appearances suddenly, in a person who lived two thousand years ago. Now, this is clearly in plain contradiction of a theory of gradual development, and therefore our first impulse is to whittle down the Cross so that it may take its own proper place in the scheme of evolution. But what if the Cross refuses to be whittled down? What if it still persists in breaking through the definitions of the evolutionary historian? What if it cannot be fitted into a historical pigeon-hole? That is, indeed, just what does happen. Call it a martyrdom—and you cannot anyhow call it anything less than that—and yet it remains the great moral event by which every other is judged; and the moral sense of man still persists in

regarding it as the supreme and unsurpassed and unsurpassable moral achievement within the limits of humanity. That there is development in history is beyond question; but if our theory of evolution fails to take in the Cross as a phenomenon of permanent and unfading immediacy, to take in the Cross in all the moral significance which it has to a modern conscience, so much the worse for the theory; and we must find a new one. The truth is that evolution in human affairs is not a mechanical process. It is a process which is conditioned by two factors—factors enormous in their power and quite incalculable in their consequences—namely, the freedom of God and the freedom of man; and with such factors as these in the field any steady, unbroken historical evolution is unthinkable.

At the same time there is evolution in the world. It is going on round about us everywhere. It is one of the methods by which God works. It is the method by which—whether in history or in nature—

God ordinarily works; and He does not depart from it except under certain conditions. When a phenomenon like the Cross appears out of all relation to its surroundings, we can only infer that God has departed from His ordinary methods and has intervened directly in human affairs—unless, that is, we are prepared to admit the presence of antecedent and contemporary factors concerning which we know nothing and which we cannot possibly discover. You cannot explain the present meaning of the Cross, its stupendous uniqueness, the place it has held in men's life and experience since the day it happened by tracing out its historical ancestry. There is nothing in the previous history that can account for it. Paul speaks of himself as one born out of due time; and the Cross equally happened out of due time. It was a moral achievement for which no adequate explanation or driving force is to be found in the antecedent historical conditions. And it is not to be adequately

explained except as a direct intervention of God in human affairs. God departed from His ordinary methods of conducting the business of the world, and broke into the world directly in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

5. Now, I want to point out what is involved in such a direct and immediate intervention by God into human affairs. The antithesis of immediate is mediate; and mediate describes a process or an event which is achieved through a medium, a means. An immediate process is one in which no medium, no middle agency is used, and the Cross is immediate in this sense. Newman has it in his hymn:

> "And that a higher gift than grace
> Should flesh and blood refine,
> God's presence and His very self,
> And essence all divine."

And we may, therefore, infer that we get a plainer and more characteristic insight into the life and character of God in His immediate operations than in those that are mediate.

We see Him more clearly through prayer than through the study of nature; we see Him more surely in the Incarnation than in the ordinary processes of history; and it is in the Cross that we are to find the surest and most luminous manifestation of God. The Cross, that is, reveals to us the hidden inner life of God; reveals it to us "in littleness that suits our faculty." The Cross becomes, therefore, not only the highest revelation of man, but the supreme revelation of God. God and man are both alike manifested in the same act. They meet in the Cross. The Cross makes godliness and manliness synonymous.

6. There is a profound metaphysical question raised at this point which I have no time to pursue now, namely the relation between divinity and humanity, and I will say no more about it than that the difference between them is a difference of dimensions and not a difference of quality. God made man in His own image—without that pre-supposition

neither religion nor reasoned thought nor knowledge are possible. But what I am more concerned at this point to show is that the Cross reveals the kind of life which God lives. The Cross is not merely an historical episode ; in its essence it is an eternal process. That there was once a Cross on earth means that there is eternally a Cross in heaven. But why ?

You will remember how Paul, in Ephesians i. 9, speaks of the purpose of God to gather together in one all things in heaven and earth. The whole mind and heart of God are given over to the business of bringing the whole scheme of things into harmony ; and we do not need to go very far to realise how needful this is. Look abroad over the world, with its endless antagonisms and wars : look into your own heart—and confess its disharmony; and then you will understand what God is purposing. He is seeking "to reconcile the world unto Himself," to bring it into one complete harmony with Himself.

But where did the disharmony start? In you and me. God made us free like Himself. Making us in His own image, He could not do otherwise; and we used our freedom in the wrong way. We were meant to use it in obedience to God, for there is no moral value in an obedience which is involuntary and forced. But freedom to obey is equally freedom to disobey. We chose to disobey, to assert ourselves, to rebel. There is a passage in the "Theologia Germanica" which defines this attitude: "What did the devil do else, or what was his going astray and his fall else, but that he claimed for himself to be somewhat and would have it that somewhat was his and something was due to him? This setting-up of a claim and his *I* and *Me* and *Mine* —these were his going astray and his fall. And thus it is to this day." Our freedom was intended to act centripetally, to bring us to God. It has worked centrifugally, it has been used to enable us to break away

from God. And this is the essence of sin (whatever the form of a particular sin may be), it is self-assertion against God. And because man is the crown of the universe, the disharmony of the whole universe follows from the alienation of man from God.

That alienation God is for ever seeking to overcome. He seeks to wipe out the disharmony, to restore unity into His universe; and the Cross indicates what the process costs Him. In the very heart of the process is that attitude and activity towards man which is called "forgiveness," the remission of sin. There can be no harmony between you and a man who has offended against you until you forgive him; and you cannot forgive him without paying a price. The price of forgiveness is self-repression, self-denial, the acceptance by you of the whole offence, your unshared and unretributive suffering of the consequences of it. To forgive an offence is to bear the offence oneself, and God could not forgive sin except

by bearing sin. Mark, it is something more than ignoring sin. If you can ignore an offence, you did not suffer greatly; and there is no virtue in ignoring it. You only forgive when you have suffered; and you do forgive only when you accept the suffering and endure it in your own heart. To bear the offence oneself is the price of forgiving it. To forgive sin is to bear sin; and to reconcile the world to Himself God suffered the penalty of forgiveness. He bore the sin of the world.

And we see Him bearing it—within the range of our limited human vision—in the Cross. The Cross is the translation, into the idiom of history, of the eternal sin-bearing of God. It is to you and me the guarantee that if we turn to God our sin will not bar the way, for God Himself has taken it away. The Cross is not merely a revelation of this process; it is the very process itself focused within the bounds of a human life.

7. But our reconciliation to God means more than the forgiveness of sin : or rather I should say that the forgiveness of our sin presupposes a certain changed attitude on our part. It implies what the New Testament calls " repentance," and repentance means a reversal. It means changing our way of life. There is a phrase which I read long ago which comes to me whenever I try to think within this region, " the harmony of an obedient will." Obedience is the converse of self-assertion ; it implies the negation of self, the dethronement of self, the acceptance of a new sovereignty. Obedience means at bottom self-surrender. Just as sin is essentially rebellion, so obedience is essentially righteousness. What on our part sets us in harmony with God is obedience. Forgiveness and obedience are the two co-ordinate elements in this process of reconciliation. When a man repents, self-assertion and self-love give way to self-renunciation.

But the scale and measure of our obedience

and self-renunciation are fixed by the Cross. Paul has a relevant word to say to us on this point: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who . . . was obedient *unto death, even the death of the Cross.*" Repentance is only complete when we accept an obedience the quality and standard of which are revealed for us in the Cross. It does not mean that those who accept this obedience will suffer an inevitable final Cross: such an obedience in this world will be a perpetual crucifixion all the way. They who share the obedience of Jesus will also share His sufferings. The eternal sacrifice of God enacted on the plane of history worked out in a Cross; and the completely reconciled soul has fellowship in the sorrow and travail of God. The Cross means, as I have put it elsewhere, "that the very deepest truth of the life of God is to become the very deepest truth of the life of man." And when a man accepts the Cross not only as the assurance of forgiveness, but as the

very badge and device under which henceforth he will live, then and not till then is he wholly reconciled to God.

I shall have something to say later on concerning the practical outcome of the life thus wholly reconciled; but meantime this is the point that I want to insist upon. The life of God must find its counterpart in the life of man. The life of God is still to be translated into terms of flesh and blood in you and me. We have to reproduce the life of God in the world. That is what we are here for; and that, and that only, is our salvation. The Cross is to be perpetuated in our lives; the life of Christ is to be continued in ours. It is given to us to share His obedience, it will be our privilege to share His sufferings and His sorrows: it will be no less our privilege to share His joys and His triumphs. *If so be that we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified with Him.*

VI

THE SAVING OF THE SOUL

1. THERE is very little that we need so much as some plain and straightforward thinking concerning the matter of salvation. The word has come to be more intimately associated with the Gospel than any other; but it is very questionable whether the sense in which we use it is either adequate to the purpose of the Gospel or quite true to the New Testament usage. Most of all has our thinking of it been obscured by persistently associating it with futurity, and in particular with reading into it the idea of safety. The assumption is that the chief factor in our life is a great peril in which we stand and from which we have somehow to be secured. And salvation is the process by which we escape that peril. I am far from denying the reality of this peril and

the need of escape; but to make this the only or the chief element in the idea of salvation is simply to caricature the New Testament conception of it.

Let it be said that no conception of salvation is complete which neglects the factors which are introduced by the idea of immortality. But care must be taken that these factors are properly understood. That there is a future life is, for us, beyond question; and there is to-day less disposition to deny the truth of it on the part of scientific and other thinkers than there has been for a long time. Of course, the existence of a future life cannot be proved. It is, on the one hand, one of those sure and indestructible intuitions which persist in spite of the most solid and convincing reasoning against them. It is, on the other hand, one of those enormous presumptions which we are compelled to make and act upon by reason of what we find ourselves and the world we live in to be. But we have

come to a time when it is no longer necessary to apologise for a belief in immortality. We are so swiftly and so surely leaving behind us the materialism of thought which could make no room for the conception of a future life that we need not go out of our way to state in detail the reasons for this faith that is in us. When materialism gives way to a spiritual view of man and the universe, the doctrine of immortality naturally comes into its own.

2. But what immortality involves we have no means of knowing. We believe that the future life is a life which is freed from many of the limitations under which we at present labour; but our ignorance of what the conditions are beyond the veil of death precludes us even from intelligent speculation as to what the future life will be like. We may infer with a high degree of certainty that it will be a reaping of the harvest which we sow in this world; that because life is continuous, we shall be over there

just what we are here, our own individual selves. We unchanged shall find ourselves in a changed environment—an environment which will be heaven or hell to us according to what we have made of ourselves in the present world. Beyond this, we can only guess. We do know, of course, that those who have lived a life reconciled to God here shall find the fullness of fellowship with God in that other world, a fellowship unqualified and untrammelled by the limitations and defects which are incidental to life in the flesh.

But even the Scriptures refuse to tell us very much more. They use language which we cannot altogether understand when they come to deal with this matter. There is the word *eternal*, for instance. We have either thought of the word eternal as meaning "everlasting," as signifying endless duration, or as signifying the absence of time altogether. We are conditioned by time in this life, and it has entered into our minds that the eternal

life is the timeless life, an ever-changeless present. But we cannot conceive that of which we speak. We can form no mental image of such a condition. In any case it is beginning to appear doubtful whether there can be conscious life apart from time. We are further unable to say whether either of these meanings correctly represents the Greek word translated "eternal." The Scriptures leave us in uncertainty; and that is inevitable. We have not the coin either of thought or of speech in which to express the values of immortality. Our ideas and words belong to the earth, to a concrete material world; and we can no more express the inwardness of eternity in them than we could get the song of a bird into a painting. What we have the right to assume is that, for good or evil, we shall be in all fullness in the future life that which we are now in part. He that is filthy shall be filthy still; and his filth will be his hell. He that is righteous will do righteousness still; and

in his righteousness will be his heaven. Beyond this it is futile and needless to speculate.

3. But what we need to learn to-day, when we are speaking of the future of man, is that the natural and the spiritual worlds are not arranged in the order of succession. It is not that we are now in the natural world and when we die we shall be in the spiritual world. The natural and the spiritual worlds are in the very closest juxtaposition at every point of time. They are both here, side by side, to-day. And we may enter into the spiritual, which is the eternal world, here and now. We do not need to wait for our last dissolution in order to enter upon eternal life. The New Testament is clear upon this point; and it is a point to which modern philosophy is coming by another route. That death brings with it a wonderful emancipation is true; but it is only the last in a series of emancipations which we experience in the process of life. There are

some of us who can recall the day in our adolescence when suddenly we seemed to break through into a new world, the day on which we discovered our own independent minds. We all remember—that is, those of us who have passed the point—the new sense of selfhood and independence which we found when we reached our majority. All life is progressive, the emancipation is also progressive, and death is simply the last act of the process, when we leave the last rag of our swaddling clothes behind us and enter upon our heritage of perfect liberty. But it only means this to us when we have a life capable of emancipation, when there is a living thing in us straining at the leash, beating out for that open, spacious, infinite air in which at last it will be perfectly at home. Death is not the gateway of the spiritual life; but we may say, I think, that it is the threshold of the Innermost.

The picture has, of course, another side. There are men who without realising it are

binding themselves, who are tying themselves up in a servitude and a thraldom in life which death makes complete. The man who lives the life of sin is forging fetters for himself, and, instead of gaining the liberty for which he was made, is selling himself into slavery. Death sets the seal of eternity upon his bondage. Whether he may at last, by the mercy of God, win out into freedom through a probation in the after-life, we do not know. We have no means of knowing. The matter is left an inscrutable mystery to us. But we cannot escape the conclusion that the flames which in death burn up the bonds of the righteous and set him eternally free do but forge heavier bonds for the filthy. You remember Omar Khayyám's lines:

"I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
Some letter of that After-life to spell:
And by and by my Soul return'd to me,
And answer'd 'I Myself am Heav'n and Hell'":

and that is true. Only it is not the whole truth. The heaven and the hell which the

soul already has are raised to the dimensions of that after-life, whatever these may be. I think we may lay down the principle that *we are saved from nothing in the after-life from which—in kind, at least—we are not in process of being saved now.*

4. I want to make a rather large general statement: The saved life is the perfect and complete life. I make the statement in this way because I want to shift the emphasis from the negative to the positive elements of salvation. It is true we are saved, and are being saved *from* something; but this negative aspect of the process is purely preliminary and preparatory. It is the clearing of the ground for the constructive elements of the work. It is the removal of the impediments and obstacles which litter the ground and hide the foundations. Salvation is a mighty constructive activity; and it covers every influence and movement and experience by which the soul is built up into perfection and completeness. It is not

merely that we have escaped a peril, but that we have also been set on solid standing ground. It is not merely that we have been cleansed from things that make for degeneracy and ruin, but that we have received a strong positive principle of advance and growth.

The positive elements in salvation have been obscured from us because we have let our minds dwell too exclusively upon the consequences of sin, because we have let the peril in which we stand monopolise our thoughts, because we have brooded too particularly upon the idea of escape. Now, we must not forget the enormous reality of this need of escape; but we must nevertheless keep it in its proper place, and we must think of it in the proper terms. We are apt to think of it in terms of a judicial process; and to regard the retribution which follows sin as being penal, and to believe that a man is punished for his sin by a stated decree. There is a principle which secures that every transgression and disobedience

shall receive due recompense of reward; there is a law of moral gravitation at work which brings sure retribution on wilful sin; and we think that penal processes are involved because that is the only figure under which we can conceive of evil-doing meeting its reward. But of all retribution there is none which is comparable with that of being left with the cravings and being denied the opportunities of sin. And this is the inevitable penalty of sin in the after-life. The opportunities and means of sin are material, carnal, temporal; and they cease in the narrows of death; but the fires of desire and the torment of lust remain. And that is how Jesus defines hell. It is the place "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched."

5. But to be delivered from that torture of craving and unrest is only the lesser part of salvation. The greater part is that which secures completeness and perfection. There is, as I said, a positive principle at work,

and I want to remind you at this point of what I have said concerning the Cross, namely, that it revealed for good and all the principle that "the deepest truth of the life of God is to become the deepest truth of the life of man." I think we may describe salvation as the process by which that comes to pass.

Now, we may say that, just as God is—in the whole inmost truth of His being—revealed to us in Jesus Christ, so our salvation is the penetration and absorption of our spirit by the Spirit of God whom we recognise in Jesus. The supreme word of our salvation is that "God sends forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts." The positive, constructive principle of our salvation is the indwelling of us by Christ.

I imagine that most people, when they hear expressions of this kind, regard them as semi-poetical religious statements which are rather moving but have no real content, which do not and cannot describe a

corresponding reality of experience. When Paul says, " It is no longer I, but Christ that liveth in me," we regard him as speaking in the ecstasy of a mystic and not in the sober reason of a practical man. But if we so think we are greatly in error. For the thing which Paul describes is one of the most reasonable and accessible experiences that we can think of. It all hangs upon the way you are going to think of personality. At the present time we are thinking of personality not in the fixed, hard, limited sense in which certain other ages have conceived of it. There have been times when men regarded personality as a walled city, an indivisible, impenetrable, rigorously defined unit ; but in the modern view personality seems rather to be a city without walls, a living, central core without a defined circumference, a burning spot which dominates an area the frontiers of which cannot be delimited. One outstanding attribute of personality is its penetrability. You

have only to consider the matter within the circle of your acquaintances to see how true this is. You see how a man and his wife have gradually become more and more like one another in temperament, in outlook. Their natures have interfused, interweaved, so much that the man can hardly think of himself apart from his wife; and when his wife dies, it seems to him as though a part had been cut out of his very self. You see the same process going on between two friends; and the greater the affection between two individuals the stronger the assimilation and interfusion. The whole trend of modern study of the mind has been in the direction of regarding personality as far deeper and wider than we had hitherto conceived of it. There is, on the one hand, that curious phenomenon of dual or multiple personality; we know of cases of unstable mental equilibrium, in which the same soul seems at times to be invested and dominated by two or more quite different individuals. There is,

moreover, the new doctrine of the subliminal consciousness, or the sub-conscious—namely, that beneath our ordinary workaday consciousness there are immeasurable depths of being, from which now and again things emerge into consciousness, but which for the most part lie—not indeed inactive or dormant—but beyond our power of exploration or of control, stretching inward infinitely, perhaps at last to God. There is among the hills in my native county a little tarn of which no man has yet sounded the bottom, and which, the country tale alleges, reaches down at last to the sea; and that is human personality—a bottomless thing which reaches at last back to God. This is what a certain modern thinker means when he says that the human mind backs on infinity.

6. Such we are then, spacious and penetrable; and we are saved when the Spirit of Christ penetrates and interfuses with our spirit and fills us. This is indeed what we were made for. That deep hidden channel

by which we are connected with God is the avenue by which the eternal Christ finds His way into our spirits. Only the channel is blocked by our disobedience, by our contumacy and our sin. We have cut ourselves away from God; that is only another way of saying that sin is self-assertion and rebellion. There is no salvation except by clearing the choked channel and keeping it open; and the clearing and opening up of the channel is our repentance and submission and obedience.

It is said that in ages long ago these islands of ours were joined to the continental mainland; but by some geological changes they were severed and echoing straits were thrown around and between them. And so we enisle ourselves by our sin; and to the soul isolation is death. Its life depends on re-establishing its connection with the great mainland of the divine life. It is a branch cut from the stock, a flower severed from its stalk, bound to wither and to die except

somehow it be grafted to the parent stock again. I have used the word *emancipation* already, and there is hardly another to equal it in appropriateness in this connection. We came into this world with a divine spark in us, the potentiality of the spiritual life, the germ of the perfect life. Our isolation, born of our sin, confirmed and deepened by persistent sin, cramps, hedges, confines this germinal spirituality within us. But when once we have re-established intercourse with the great world of the spirit, when the channels of commerce are thrown open and Christ has come to us and is, as Paul says, formed within us, this mighty seedling is set free, germinates and straightway begins to grow. That emancipation and that growth constitute our salvation.

Now, I have insisted on a view of salvation which regards it, not as an outward condition into which we enter, but as a perfecting process which works from within outward. It is the working of a leaven, the growth of a living

thing, and it embraces every aspect of our personality. It is not a moral thing only. It is deeper than that; it is a spiritual process, a process of which the moral consequences are the widest and the most important, but which has its own consequences over the whole area of one's life. It is a salvation of the intellect, of the emotions, of the passions; it is a salvation of the whole man. It is in its completeness even a salvation of his body. Of this aspect of it I cannot say anything now. But there are two points upon which I want to say a word before I conclude.

First of all, the strength and pace of the saving process bears a definite relation to the closeness of our intimacy with Christ. In those instances of interpenetrating personalities which I gave—and the supreme instance which I did not give, namely, the Trinity—there was a condition which I only hinted at. Between man and wife, between two friends, there is the mighty affinity of love;

and love is the solvent of personality. It is the furnace in which personalities fuse; and it is when the relation between Christ and ourselves has become one of love that we are assimilated to Him wholly and are soundly and mightily saved. That is why the first great commandment of the Law is "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, with all thy mind." To love God is to be made one with God. To love God is to receive and partake of the life of God, which is completeness and perfection of life. To love God is perfect reconciliation.

But love once kindled works out in another way. The process of salvation has its own consequences in our life. When we are linked up with the mainland of God, we enter upon a new relation to our fellow-men. We begin to throw out bridges to join ourselves up with men. The first practical outcome of salvation is a social consciousness, and the right kind of social consciousness. That is why the second great commandment

of the Law is "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

The last word concerning the salvation of the soul is that we are saved through love and we are saved for love. Love is the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega, of our salvation.

VII

THE ENDS OF LIFE

1. HUMAN personality is the highest achievement of Life, the climax of that creative process to which in modern times we have learnt to give the name of evolution. But we have found in the course of our discussions that human personality only achieves its own highest development as it becomes subject to the impact of and penetration by a higher personality, no less than the personality of God as it is expressed and revealed in terms of our humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. The invasion and indwelling of the human spirit by the Spirit of Jesus, by virtue of that quality of penetrability which is characteristic of human personality, becomes the beginning of a new plane of self-expression and development. And the Scripture that emerges at this point with peculiar relevancy

is that of St. Paul in the Philippian Epistle, "Work out your own salvation, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." But of all this process, what is the end?

The first question which we have to face when we come to consider the ends of human life is—What is the ultimate end of all life, of all this age-long process of creation of which man, in all that he is, is the latest, if not the last, phase? Unless the whole thing is a mere accident, it must have a meaning and a goal. We are not likely at this time of day, in view of all that we know of the universe and the wonderful order which pervades it, and particularly in view of the higher nature of man and of the uniqueness of human achievement in the regions of knowledge and art and applied science, to accept any view of the universe which regards it as an accident or its history as a congeries of happy or unhappy chances. It means something, and it means it intensely. But

if it has an ultimate meaning, that clearly must be a meaning *to someone,* and as we believe that man himself contains a part of that meaning, it must in the last analysis be a meaning to someone beyond him—which leaves us with the only possible conclusion that the entire and final significance of the universe is a significance to God, and therefore in its entirety a significance which only God can take in.

But we may at least hazard the speculation that the impulse of creation is the joy of self-expression. The thing that is likest to God that we know of is the human spirit, and there is no human joy comparable to that which is born of worthy self-expression ; and indeed this principle runs through the whole of sentient life. It underlies the song of the bird and the play of the lamb ; it takes Peary to the North Pole and Amundsen to the South ; and in its highest expressions it breaks out in the splendid immortalities of love and art. We must believe that God

is not the prisoner of His own perfection. The God of the New Testament is a worker—we have it on the word of Jesus; and through all His work, both in creation and redemption, He is moving on to a goal of perfect self-expression which is perfect joy and rest. He sends forth His Word that it may return to Him, not void, but having accomplished that whereunto He sent it; and the Word that returns bringing with it a penitent prodigal to his Father brings with it (so Jesus says) joy, joy in the presence of the angels; and I believe that when the Word returns with a piece of perfect work, a piece of disinterested and lofty human achievement, a noble sculpture, a worthy poem, a floor swept clean for the love of Christ, a deed of pure charity, it all adds to the joy and the wealth of God. God, if I may put it so, invests His Love, His Wisdom, His Power in this marvellous universe of which we are a part; it is God's great venture, and when the enterprise wins through in any part of

it and brings to God now an offering of perfect achievement, or again an offering of a penitent heart, some Word of God, creative, redemptive, has come full cycle, bringing with it the joy of self-fulfilment to the heart of God. It is the return upon the investment and the promise that the whole enterprise will some day carry through. You remember that great word in 1 Corinthians xv., "When all things have been subjected unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subjected to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all." What that last phrase means we can only guess. But when the whole long tale of the scheme of things is told, when all disharmony has been overcome, when the confusion and miscarriage wrought by human disobedience have given way to the perfect harmony of a redeemed universe, then, in some deep, inscrutable way, God will be fulfilled: He will be, as Paul says, "all in all." Beyond that point we may not look. It may indeed be that when this

universe has reached its goal, God may set out on some still more wonderful quest, to create more splendid worlds and to express Himself in a created life that will make human personality seem a crude and insignificant trifle. But of these things it is futile to speculate.

2. Meantime we know that here and now God is at work; and the highest channel of His activity is the human soul. What is of practical importance to us is to discover that which God is seeking through us. That we are means to God's end does not mean that we have not an end in ourselves too; it does not mean that we are only cogs in the wheel, mere tools to be discarded when we have served our turn. On the contrary we know that it is only as we achieve a certain definite end for ourselves that we serve God's ends. It is by becoming all that we potentially are, by realising all our possibilities, by rising to the full stature of our manhood, by achieving whatever perfection of personality is accessible

to us that we do have a real meaning to God and a real place in His purpose. But all this brings with it a certain satisfaction *to ourselves;* it constitutes a real end *for us*. There is joy of life for us even as there is for God; and we only achieve joy for God in the measure that we live the life and practice the kind of self-expression that bring genuine joy to us. We are so intimately involved in the Divine Purpose that we cannot achieve God's ends except as we achieve the ends which He has appointed for ourselves.

3. Now, what are these ends? Let me remind you that God's activity runs along two main but complementary lines. It is creative and redemptive. And since (as we have seen) the saved life is that which is invested and indwelt by God, it follows that our self-expression will have this two-fold character; it also will be creative and redemptive.

We must begin by analysing this idea

of creation. When I was a lad I was taught that to create is to make something out of nothing, and that it was a power which only God possessed. But we do not define it any longer in that way. What we mean by creation is the production of a new, original, independent thing. The question of the materials is secondary. The creative power may work with any material; but its peculiar quality is that it does something which has not been done before, that it strikes out a new line, that it has broken away from ruts and precedents, and has achieved an entirely new thing in the world. The inventor, the artist, the poet, each is a creator in this sense. This immediate power of creation seems to be the prerogative and the privilege of the few; and yet on a deeper view it must not be regarded as their peculiar and unshared monopoly. The creative genius is not an isolated and independent individual; he is a member of society, a member of a race, and he is unique only in the sense that he

is the individual in whom the creative faculty of the whole society of which he is a member has been gathered up and focused. High creative power is essentially the mark of a highly developed social order. The creative genius is the product of the race, the individual in whom this distinctive quality of creativeness has been concentrated. Creativeness must be regarded not as the attribute of the individual but of the race; and every single member of the race is a creator in so far as the race produces individuals of creative genius. The creative individual is the man in whom the upward push of the life of the race attains its highest point. And it is a true instinct which regards Homer, Shakespeare, Goethe, Michelangelo, not as distinguished individuals but supreme expressions of the national genius.

But no race has a creative faculty at all except only as it is indwelt by God. Nations seized in the grip of materialism produce no great literature, no art, no poetry, no sculpture.

You will find that almost all the highest and most abiding achievements in art are religiously inspired; and it is a remarkable reflection also that great creative activity in art and invention is a phenomenon of special times and places. The creative power has its ups and downs, and it is true that it is up just when the religious life of a people is most vivid and active. We have creative power only when and just in the measure that God is in us.

It is a doctrine which needs to be insisted upon that national life finds its real expression not in the pursuit of wealth or of empire, but in its art. Shakespeare is a more wonderful and a richer achievement of the English nation than its world-wide possessions. The things that give a nation immortality are not its conquests, but its triumphs in literature and painting and music and sculpture. These triumphs are wrought by individuals, but these individuals are the characteristic products of the nation, and their own self-expression in art is the

expression of the national life. But they only become possible when they rest upon a wholesome national life which is pervaded by the Spirit of God, and in which every member makes by his own work a contribution to the whole life of the community. You and I have a part in every noble picture that is painted, in every lofty poem that is sung in our own day; they are *our* work, the supreme expression of the massed striving of all of us. You are a maid who sweeps the floor, or you are a clerk whose business is with ledgers, or you are a mother who cares for her family—whatever you are, you are part of that mass which, by the faithfulness of its labour, builds up that structure of national life which (to change our figure) here and there bursts out like the corona of the sun into mighty flames of triumphant creative artistic achievement. It is thus the divine life works out in you. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work"; and He works also in us whenever we turn out a piece of finished work. When

we put all we are and know into our work, when we are possessed by that spirit of divine artistry which spares nothing of itself, when in the handling of the slightest job we rise to the full dimensions of our manhood, we are reinforcing that creative impulse which brings immortality to the nation and to the race by the noble things which it produces. Divinely inspired and divinely impelled work, that is one end of our life—work by which, because we put into it all that we are, all our strength and all our souls, we become sharers in those creative achievements by which a people is immortalised.

4. I want to return to this point again presently; but meantime let me pick up the other line of my argument. God's activity is not only creative but redemptive. As we have seen, the impulse of redemption is love. We are saved by love, and we are saved for love. But love implies a social existence. We are in this world gathered into groups of various kinds, into families and cities,

into commonwealths and continents. And it is ordained that we can only achieve our highest possibilities through a social existence. We have already seen that creative genius is the product of a social order, and that at its best it can only be found in a social order of a highly developed kind. Now, the only foundation, the only energy of cohesion for a social order is love; and love is that human affinity which emerges when selfishness is crushed. The process of redemption, as we saw it, was a process of self-surrender, of self-suppression; and that self-love which is the source of all sin, once eliminated, makes room for a social consciousness. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Now, love has its qualities and degrees; and these variations of love determine the social groups in which we are gathered. First, the love of man and woman which creates the family group, with its fine products of parental and filial love; then the kinship which is born of similar or complementary tempera-

ments which creates the various social groups of friendship and religious fellowship; the affinity, also, of common labour and common interests which creates social classes, the distinctions of which are intellectual or economic; and lastly that community of historical and racial tradition and abode which makes the nation. The energy of cohesion which binds these together is love. Where there is no love there is disruption. We see this divisiveness in the industrial wars which are characteristic of our own time. There can be no stable national or social life except in that nation or that society which is redeemed in the full Christian sense—a society in which selfishness is extinguished by the invasion of love through the divine indwelling.

And since for the highest purposes of our manhood we must have a genuine social life, it belongs to every true soul to seek after a high social conduct, the kind of social conduct which does truly unify a people. This kind

of social conduct is born only of the divine indwelling; and in the individual this divine indwelling is essentially a socially redemptive force. That is indeed the first and immediate end of our life—through the divine indwelling to become redeemers of others, of society. Without a redeemed society humanity has no future; without God-invested men and women there can be no redeemed society. Through the indwelling of God in Christ we love men and become propagators of love, of that love which alone can bind men into a social order in which manhood can come into its kingdom.

In such a social order every quality and degree of human affinity will be raised to higher dimensions. In a community bound fast by love, the love of husband and wife, of parent and child, of friend and friend, will become a purer, nobler, mightier thing. In a selfish materialistic society we shall inevitably have a low tone and a weakness of family life, a thinness and a precariousness of

friendship out of which little good can come; but when our personal and private relationships are lifted up to and carried out on the high plane of a love-inspired social order we shall scale heights of joy in one another of which we never dreamed.

5. In these two things, then, I find the real ends of life—*Love*, expressing itself as a redemptive power through us; *Work*, expressing itself in its highest reaches in the triumphs of art, and which therefore itself partakes of the creative quality of art. God in us carries on His characteristic activities of creation and redemption, and so we become partakers with God of that experience which comes to Him when His own activity hits the mark at last in the return of the prodigal or in some worthy offering of human achievement. I believe that we were made for joy, and joy is a greater thing than rest. Joy is indeed the true rest; and of joy there are two mainsprings in human life: the joy of love and the joy of faithful work, our joy in

one another and our joy in finished achievement. This two-fold joy is the joy of self-fulfilment, and we share it with God. It is "the joy of the Lord" of which Jesus speaks in the parable.

I have tried to work out all this on the positive side; and I do not know how far I have carried you with me. But if I have not carried you with me, it is probably because we are all yet under the dominion of prepossessions which spring from our upbringing in a materialistic age. It is difficult for us to shake ourselves free from the idea that the ends of life are to be found in the concrete and immediate achievements of a world of sense, in money-making, in artificial pleasure, in the acquisition of position or fame. In the main we are laid hold of by one of two notions, either by the craving for wealth or by the passion for intellectual distinction; and neither of these can bring rest or abiding joy. They fail to bring rest or joy because they are partial and sectional things. They

do not touch the whole of our manhood; and nothing can do that except the indwelling Spirit of God. The fundamental difference between the God-filled life and the life of the natural man is this: that the latter is a striving and a seeking of external good, while the former is the free, spontaneous outworking of an inner Spirit. The one sets itself a goal to be reached and never reaches it, the other finds a base from which to start and reaches its goal without worrying about it. If we could only cleanse ourselves of all these benumbing prepossessions and think the matter through to the end, we should realise that of all possible ways of life this alone fits our manhood, to wit, the life of God in us, outworking in perfect love and perfect work and bringing with it the very joy of God all the way. It is a life independent of the changes and chances of a mutable world, a life springing from God and through its characteristic expressions of love and labour turning again to God and mingling its joy with His.

VIII

MIRACLE AND PRAYER

I PROPOSE to take up in this lecture, with more fullness, two matters upon which I have already touched incidentally.

I.—MIRACLES

1. The presence of miracles in the Gospel narrative has constituted in our day one of the chief stumbling blocks to the acceptance of their validity as historical documents. In the last analysis, the truth of a recorded miracle is a question of evidence; and the acceptance of the New Testament miracles as genuine historical happenings is not to be separated from the general question of the authenticity of the entire history recorded in the Gospels and the Book of Acts. If, as modern criticism demands that we should, we accept the

Gospels as genuine historical documents I can see no way out of the acknowledgment of the historicity of the miracles therein recorded.

Still, it is useless to shut one's eyes to the fact that miracles are still a stumbling block to many people; and I think it might be worth our while to examine the grounds of the objections to the belief in the miraculous. Put in a single word, the objection to miracles broadly is this: that they do not happen nowadays. We have learnt from science that there is a regular physical order in the world, that this physical order is not tolerant of interference or suspension; and since miracles are in their very nature breaches of that physical order, we are to refuse to accept them as historical events and to put them down to the superstition and to the consequent bias and incapacity as observers of the evangelic historians.

2. As we have already seen, this objection is in our day in process of losing its validity.

The advance of our scientific knowledge, so far from confirming the conception of the rigidity of the physical order, is steadily discrediting it within the sphere in which this particular question moves, namely in the kingdom of organic life. In the region of life it is seen to be precarious to speak of rigid, immutable laws; all that it is safe to say is that there are certain general tendencies, but within the range of these tendencies there is the widest possible opportunity for indefinite variation. But what is more to the point just now is that we find that certain natural processes are capable of being affected by the imposition upon them of human intelligence. Processes of evolution can be speeded up in a laboratory; changes can be wrought in certain animal characteristics by the artificial modification of their surroundings; and in many ways nature can be prevented from having her own way by the operations of a human mind. And it is perfectly obvious that as

our knowledge of nature grows, and our understanding of the points at which she may be subjected to the influence of mind increases, we shall be more and more able to produce results which in the narrow sense seem miraculous.

If one realises all that is implied in this circumstance, the problem of miracle simplifies itself very considerably. For the human mind is after all not the mightiest thing in the world. It is only an element in the equipment of a far greater and mightier thing—namely *personality*. On any proper view of personality it is perilous to assign any limits to its powers. When you have intelligence and intuition fused with initiative and freedom—and in personality rightly conceived this is what you have—you have a force of quite incalculable potency.

But why, then, do *we* not perform miracles? If this power belongs to personality, how is it that so few people have ever possessed it? It is true that this power has been the

monopoly of the few; but that is because personality is in a sense an achievement, and very few men have achieved real personality. Let us look at ourselves and we shall recognise at once that we lack the very essence of personality, namely unity. We are a bundle of impulses, and there is hardly one of us of whom it can be said that his entire force is focused to one point. We are made up of various parts and powers; but these parts and powers are not fused into one effective whole. There is not in our life a single task upon which we fall with the total combined weight of our entire being. We are personal, no doubt, but we have not achieved personality in the highest sense. That kind of personality was indeed only achieved once in history. It was achieved in Jesus Christ. There were others in those days who came near it; but these were for the most part men who had lived with Him and had in part divined the secret of this mighty achievement. There have been in the course of

the Christian ages a few others here and there who have scaled similar heights; and if we could share their secret and act upon it, we should be able to repeat their works.

Their secret is, I think, simply this, that they achieved real personality through the invasion and the indwelling of their spirits by the Spirit of Christ. He supplies us with the one instance of humanity gathered up into God, as the Athanasian Creed puts it, of the perfect union of God and man; and He shows us the measure up to which our humanity can be indwelt by God. I believe that such a God-invested personality can exercise dominion over all things. That was what Jesus meant when He said "Nothing shall be impossible unto you." He meant that the attachment to God which is established by a complete faith invests us in our measure with the power of God; and it is pure little-mindedness and cowardice which refuses to accept Jesus' word at its face value and whittles it down to mean that we can

do the big tasks that are likely to confront us in life. Jesus meant that we should be able to do the impossible, the unusual, the extraordinary tasks which in the common way we write off as beyond our powers. After all a miracle is simply an act for which there is no precedent, an act which is unusual and unexpected, an act in which a man outstrips nature. It is the last absurdity that, when we have a personality like that of Jesus to deal with, we should imagine that we are not to trust the history in which His life is recorded because He performed miracles. If we believe in God at all, and if we believe that human personality is a vehicle and the supreme vehicle which God has devised for His own self-expression, we can set no limits to what a man may achieve. At least we shall come to see that, so far from finding the presence of miracles in the Gospels a stumbling block, we should have every reason to be astonished if they were not there. Miracles are beyond our range

because we are small and are content to remain small; but what we in our dullness call a miracle was to Jesus as natural as breathing or speaking. If we would only try resolutely to ascend to His plane, we should cease to be astonished that He performed miracles, just because we should find ourselves getting near doing something uncommonly like them.

II.—PRAYER

1. Now, the modern conception of the non-rigidity of natural law opens up a far wider range of possibilities than the justification of a belief in miracles. For, carried to its logical issue, it implies, for one thing among others, the real possibility of genuine prayer. Our belief in prayer has lost reality and substance because we have allowed our minds to be invaded by this conception of law, which involves a predestination far sterner than any that Calvin ever conceived. We live in a world which consists of an endless

chain of cause and effect, and we have been taught to believe that there is nothing in the effect which was not already in the cause. But biology tells us that this view is hardly borne out by the living processes of nature. The reign of law implies that we can with some assurance predict what the issue will be of a given set of circumstances. Modern biology says we cannot do anything of the kind; and that there are factors at work in the vital processes of nature which elude our scrutiny. I am not going to touch upon the metaphysical implications of this; but what I wish to point out is that that iron rigidity of law which barred out prayer is no longer a tenable doctrine. It is true that, so far as our present knowledge extends, this change of view applies only to living nature, and that we have no right to suppose that there is anything but the most unalterable operation of law in the non-living physical universe. It is a great mercy that it is so. It is one of the indispensable con-

ditions of reasonable life that we may reckon on the sun rising to-morrow, and that there is no likelihood of its not doing so. That suggests for us that while there is no logical reason for believing that a free God could not, if He would, make the sun stand still on the other side of the world—I am speaking now in a loose way—there is no reasonable ground for supposing that He would do so, however hard we might pray for it, since that would involve consequences of the most disastrous kind for all of us. You may lay it down that God has no ear for any kind of prayer the granting of which would react disastrously on other people; and inso-much as any interference with the regularity of the physical order would throw our whole life into confusion, it is useless to pray for anything that would entail such an inter-ference. God could answer it; but He will not. It is essential to a reasonable religion that we should believe in a reasonable God.

2. We may say, therefore, that prayer which

bears upon *life*, upon *living things*, is a reality; there is a sufficient elasticity of law in this region to entitle us to believe that the course of nature may be modified, arrested, speeded up by our prayers. And the farther away we get from what is purely physical, the more room there is for prayer. I believe it is a practical and fruitful proposition to pray for a sick body; but it is far more so to pray for a sick soul. I would not assign—it would be sheer presumption to do so—any limit to the possibilities of prayer; all I say is that the higher we get in the scale of freedom the more real ground there is for prayer. Really this is all that matters. There are two great subjects for prayer—ourselves and others. Most of our prayers belong to this region; they are either personal petitions or intercessions. Insomuch as we believe that we are free, that (whatever laws may surround us) in the last resort we have the power of self-determination, we have the right to infer there is any amount of

room for effectual prayer. Prayer is only impossible in a region of iron law: in the highest reaches of human life it is absolutely sure that it is not all iron law, which means that prayer is a genuine possibility. What we demand before we pray, if our prayers are to be real, is that we shall be able to believe that they can make a real difference. Whether they do make a difference is a point to be tested by experiment. And since there seems to be no reason why prayer for ourselves and for others should not make a difference, it might be as well to try.

3. One consequence of prayer—quite apart from its answer—is its effect in relating us more intimately to God and making the divine indwelling an increasing reality. It belongs to most people's experience that they begin to pray for something. Many, indeed, do not get beyond that point; but in the case of others this kind of prayer leads to another, a fellowship with God which is sought, if not for its own sake, yet for the

sake of that fuller self-realisation which comes by reason of it. I spoke a few moments ago of achieving personality, and this is the way of it. It was thus Jesus maintained it. He was the Person and continued to be the Person He was, because of those night He spent on the mountain-side in prayer. The life of sustained prayer is the life that leads to full personal realisation. It is that which brings and keeps on bringing into us that creative divine life which may and will, when we have it, work signs and wonders through us.

IX

THE MORAL

1. THE assumption which has lain behind these addresses is that the forms in which Christian truth embodies itself vary from age to age. The change of habit is not accomplished easily. Being by nature traditionalists, and therefore unwilling to set out from an anchorage which is fixed and concrete into the unknown deeps of thought which lie beyond, we tend to remain tied up to the idioms of a past age, and in consequence our apprehension of the truth is left behind by the tide of life which is for ever moving onward. The heart of the Gospel cannot become obsolete, but the clothes in which one age dresses it are not in the next suitable to it either in size or character. What we have been trying to do in these studies is to see how Christianity appears, clad in a modern habit.

Now what we have called the heart of the Gospel is a personal experience; and put broadly this experience is a relationship to Jesus Christ. Whatever else may change, this does not. The relationship may not always be interpreted in the same fashion. That is determined to a great extent by the time and place in which the person concerned is living. The relation may vary in depth and intensity; it may possess differing degrees of completeness, and therefore we may infer that it will differ in the extent of its consequences.

2. It is this point which I now desire to develop. I wish to show that our relation to Jesus Christ should be a fuller and completer thing than any Christians before us have experienced since the days of the Apostles; and that, therefore, the consequences of this relationship should be correspondingly greater.

The completeness of our relationship to Jesus Christ will be determined by two

factors—first, what we conceive ourselves to be; and second, what we conceive Him to be.

i. As to the first factor, there can be no question that our conception of ourselves is very different from that of our fathers. There have been three directions in which we have learnt to think of our manhood as possessing greater possibilities than our fathers knew.

(*a*) We seem to have transcended all previous human achievements along two lines—first, in the triumphs of mind—that is, in the advance of science and the technical application of it; and second, in our physical achievements. It has been left to our age to develop those qualities of physical endurance and courage which have at least discovered the two poles of the earth. This, of course, is the climax of a long struggle after physical fitness; and though it is in a sense a subordinate thing, yet it does add to our estimate of the power

with which our manhood is invested. Never was man's greatness so plain as it is to-day.

(*b*) There is also an increasing sense of the unity of our manhood. It has been our tendency for many a long day to live our life out in instalments and sections, and to think about ourselves in the same disjointed way; but we are very surely coming to realise that each of us is *one whole* fitly framed together, and that the end of life is not knowledge, or prosperity, or any other partial or subordinate terminus, but living. And in especial we are overcoming that particular fallacy that we have two parts, one of the world and the other not of the world, for which we must legislate differently. We have thought that our business in the City had no great connection with our business in regard to getting to heaven; but we are discovering that the way to heaven is through the City. We are gaining a clearer sense of the true unity of life.

(*c*) We have, moreover, recovered the idea

of the penetrability of personality—that is, its amenability to invasion and investment by other spirits and supremely by the Spirit of Christ; and the corollary of this is, that there is endless reinforcement available for our manhood in fellowship with God. By these modern notions of the power, the unity, and the penetrability of our manhood we have achieved a livelier sense of the possibilities of man than the world has ever had before.

ii. We now come to our second factor, *what we conceive Christ to be.* This is a somewhat complex matter. For what we conceive Christ to be depends largely upon the connections in which we find Him. I have spoken of those critics who, because they failed to fit Jesus into a scheme of evolution thought it their duty to whittle down His figure to the least possible dimensions. I tried to appeal from this judgment to history. But even the appeal to history is not the last word in the matter. For history is itself only a phase of the self-expression

and the self-manifestation of God; and history, if it is to be seen in the right perspective, must be related to the whole tremendous process of divine self-expression in nature. The whole sum of things and its movement from beginning to end is one coherent and consistent work. The wide courses of the stars, the mighty sweep of historical movement, the upward struggle of life, all these, both in their vastness as a whole and in all the innumerable details of which they consist, down to the thinnest veil of star-dust, to the most infinitesimal animalcule, to the elusive *ion* which man can weigh and measure but cannot see, all this is one work, one purpose, closely articulated in all its parts. What you will conceive of Jesus depends upon where you put Him in that scheme.

Frankly, I put Him in the centre of it, for unless I do I cannot understand it at all. The greater I see that scheme to be, the greater He becomes with it. We know in our day far better than any age ever knew

how great, how wonderful the universe is, and just because of that Christ should be to us more wonderful, more glorious than He ever was before. I know—as all of you know—little village shops in which you can buy anything from a packet of pins or a rasher of bacon to a bedstead or perhaps an agricultural implement. The shopkeeper is the "universal provider" in the village. But you also know some of our great stores in London. The difference between the village shop and one of these places is simply a difference of dimensions. They are both doing the same thing, only they are doing it on a different scale ; but the very difference of scale implies a corresponding difference in the size of the brains that are behind the two concerns. Now, the universe as we know it is the same universe as Athanasius or Augustine knew, but there is an enormous difference in scale. The universe we know is a vastly greater one ; and the Christ whom we see at its centre is a vastly greater Christ

than our fathers saw. The same Christ, indeed, but seen in a mightier setting; the same Christ, but the image, the presentment, on a hugely greater scale. And as our knowledge grows, as it must grow, from more to more, so must our sense and our conception of Christ grow. He can be in Himself no other than He was, but *to our minds* greater and ever greater and more glorious than before.

I have tried to show you in these lectures why I place Christ where I do. I have in particular endeavoured to show that He is the crown of revelation, the climax of God's self-manifestation. It is His life that lets us into the secret of what God is aiming at in all His work; and it is the only intelligible clue yet given to the mystery of things. So long as this clue holds in the light of expanding knowledge, so long must Christ remain at the centre of this whole scheme of things. Without Him the whole universe would be a confused and perplexing aggre-

gation of things; with Him it becomes a coherent, intelligible whole. If Browning is right when he says in "A Death in the Desert"—

> "I say the acknowledgment of God in Christ, accepted by thy reason
> Solves for thee all problems in the earth and out of it,"

we shall find Christ fuller of the glory of God as little by little we unfold the unspeakable grandeur and wonder and wisdom of all the handiwork of God.

3. Now, this realisation of a larger manhood and this enlarged conception of Christ add something to the strength and power of our relation to Christ. The law of gravitation is simply the statement of the truth that two bodies attract one another with a force which varies directly as the product of their masses and inversely as the square of the distance between them. That is, the bigger they are the more strongly they draw one another; the nearer they are to one another

the more powerfully they attract each other. This same principle applies to our relation to Christ; the greater we believe ourselves to be, the greater we conceive Him to be, the mightier will be the drawing between us and Him, the more power there will be in our relationship to Him. And all this will work out in the consequences.

Now, the consequences are what count. When Jesus said to His disciples that except their righteousness exceeded that of the Scribes and Pharisees they could not enter the Kingdom of God, He was not criticising the Scribes and Pharisees so much as the system which controlled them. They were, in some respects at least, all right so far as they went. Their righteousness corresponded to the light which they had. But you, He says virtually, you have more light than they, you have more insight, you have more spiritual power, and if your righteousness is not a greater thing than theirs, well, you are not worthy of the Kingdom into which you

have entered. Just because your advantages are greater your righteousness must be a larger, stronger, more effectual thing than theirs. This principle applies also to us. We have more light; and in that new light we are greater and Christ is more glorious; and if our righteousness, if our practical Christianity is not a stronger and finer thing than the world has yet seen, then we are unworthy of the light which we have had. Our larger light should work out in a larger Christian life and a nobler Christian conduct.

4. Let me for a moment revert to the illustration from the law of gravitation again. The nearer two bodies are the more strongly do they attract one another; but we have seen that the essential Christian life is not a life with Christ, but a life in Christ and Christ in us. He is "not even so far off as to be near"; He becomes our very life; and just because our conception of Him is enlarged we should expect our Christian

life to be enlarged in the same measure. If it is not so enlarged, it is because it is arrested by our selfishness. Our relationship to Him is not complete. And consequently our Christian living will not be commensurate either with what is possible or with what the world has a right to expect from us. Let your light so shine before men; but men are very swift to judge whether our light is up to standard, whether it is a worthy reflection of the professions we make, and whether it is strong enough to assert itself triumphantly in a world of increasing light. Our light should be the most pervasive and dominating thing in the world; but it will not be so until our relation to Christ is complete and until that relation includes all that we know Christ and all that we know ourselves to be.

For remember that, though we may as a matter of thought assign Christ a central place in the scheme of things, in the last resort the cardinal Christian fact is our

personal relation to Christ. This is not a mediated but a direct relation, and it is a stupendous thought that you and I may be connected directly with this Christ who is the soul and the clue and the interpretation of the whole sum of things. Paul saw long ago that in Christ all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom are hidden. What this implies is in its entirety beyond our understanding; but it at least means that all knowledge and wisdom are embodied and gathered up in a personality, and that those abstractions of thought which isolate the truth and refuse it a personal and human content are futile and vain. The whole universe is held together by personality, *this* personality, as Paul says; and it is around Him that the whole universe revolves. And the most startling and overwhelming of all reflections is surely this, that this personality who stands in the very centre of things will enter into direct personal relationship with the single soul.

What He is in the universe He must be in the soul. The place ascribed to Him in the whole sum of things is the place which must be assigned to Him in our lives. He must be central to both. This carries with it as its signal that His reaction upon the soul must be over the whole of it. We have thought of Him—and rightly—as our Saviour. But He is our Saviour in order that He may be infinitely more to us. He begins by being our Saviour in order that He may go on to be everything to us, and at last so to absorb and assimilate the ego of each one of us into Himself that *He* becomes our very selves.

And the chief business of every one of us in this world is to facilitate that process, to make more and more room for Christ by more and more suppressing our selfishness. There is a danger lest we should misinterpret the significance of the new revelation of human greatness. We may perhaps think that it means that we can do without Christ.

But what it does mean is that there is more room in us for Christ ; and our conception of Christ has grown along with it, in the providence of God, to show that there is in Him a greatness which corresponds to our greatness. And it is, as I said, when we permit ourselves to be invaded and wholly invested by the Spirit of Christ that we achieve real creative personality. Until then we shall remain a race of pygmies, small, ineffectual molecules of life.

He who would attain to the full stature of his manhood must needs let the great Christ in.

Printed by
Cassell & Company, Limited, La Belle Sauvage,
London, E.C.



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